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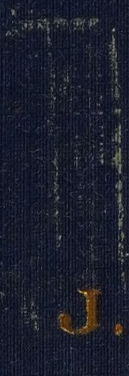
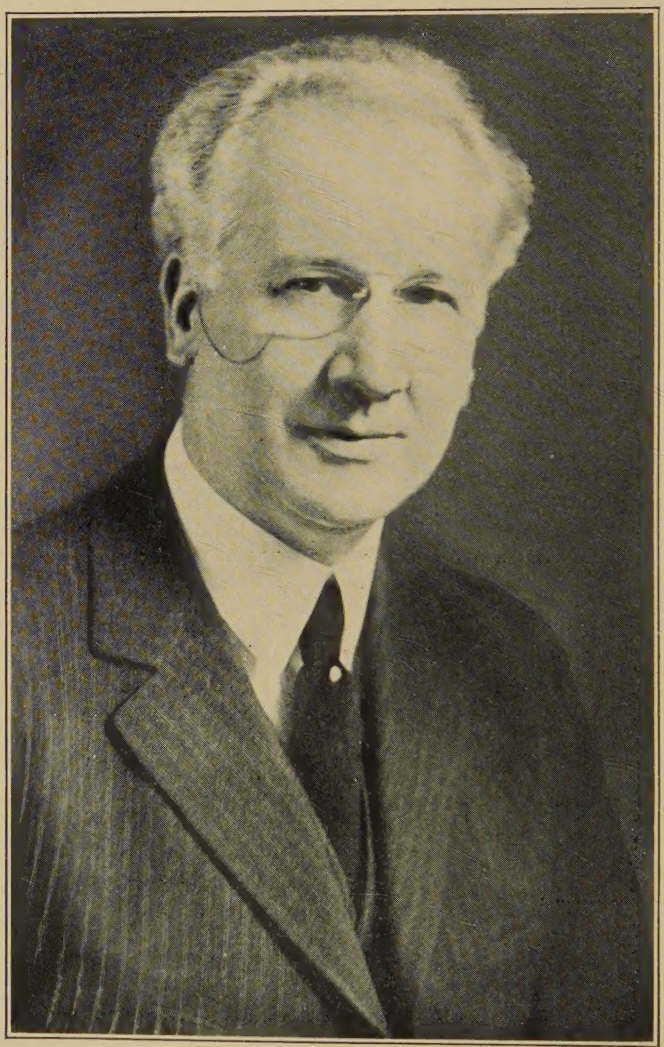


J. C. MASSEE

PIONEERS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS



J. C. Massee

PIONEERS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

OR

OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTER SERMONS

BY

J. C. MASSEE, D.D., LL.D.

TREMONT TEMPLE
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Pioneers in Righteousness

To

W. B. RILEY, D.D.

Gracious and Generous Friend

PREFACE

THE OLD TESTAMENT is full of the symbolism of experience. Along with its types, shadows, and symbols, its ceremonials and rituals, its pages are filled with the experiences of men which in their relation become the source of warning, instruction, reproof profitable for those who read with spiritual discernment.

These experiences are related in order to unfold those doctrines of revelation which are embodied in experience as the expression in conduct of those governing principles of life revealed in supernatural religion. Christianity is a life expressing a doctrine, not a doctrine stereotyping a life. Righteousness is rightness, attendant upon and proceeding from relation. Holiness is the fountain: righteousness is the stream of life.

The messages of this book embody fewer illustrations than are ordinarily employed in my sermons, for life itself is illustrative. The Scripture characters herein presented are real men, historic characters. They are too

human not to be. None the less, they serve as manikins displaying both human frailties and divine virtues. Exposition of their experiences as related in the Scriptures marvelously parallel the experiences of men today. Any man conversant with current history can easily select from among his contemporaries men who might exchange places with any of these Old Testament men by the simple change of a name and a generation.

I have not hesitated to expound doctrine in connection with these character sketches, for I am fully assured that doctrine is to life in its moral aspects as the backbone and ribs are to man. There can be no integrity of life apart from the soundness of the truth held tenaciously within the inner convictions of the soul.

I have pleasure in dedicating the volume to the one man in the modern Christian ministry whose ministry impresses me as being a stream whose flowing waters are the result of the converging flow of those streams of truth released by Isaiah of the Old and John of the New Testament.

J. C. M.

Tremont Temple,
Boston, Mass.

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I

Enoch—The Translated Man

Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

—Genesis 5:24.

By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.

—Hebrews 11:5-6.

HERE is Enoch's epitaph penciled at the instance of his best friend. There was never one like it: "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

The record of a whole life may be written in one sentence. All that matters about a man can be cut into letters on his tombstone. The exercise of a little imagination and a little ingenuity can write in all the details. "Enoch walked with God." It is not at all difficult to

see the righteousness of his social relations, the patience of his domestic virtues, the stern, yet gracious, integrity of his moral life, the adamantine resistance to those subtle temptations that undermine and destroy. Reading this sentence about him, he seems across the elastic centuries a living personality still. Gracious words fall from his lips; kindly deeds are familiar to his hands; straight paths only attract his feet, yet men know where to find him. Convictions confirm conduct. You discern at once that he is not a man of excuses and subterfuges and evasions. You are impressed that he will be one who has a reason for his manner of life; that his conduct will be based upon a solid foundation of character. You cannot conceive of such a man having to give bond for his word, or of being neglectful of his obligations. It is impossible to imagine his children afraid of him and equally impossible to conceive of them as flagrantly irreverent with him. It is not difficult to draw a pen picture of a life spent in walking with God.

All this is equally true of others. Take, for instance, the fifth chapter of Genesis, and the epitaph upon the tomb of every man mentioned in that list is simply "he died." How

subtle the insinuation that these were all just links in life's progressing family. Nothing recorded, nothing worthy to be recorded except that he was one of the links in humanity's chain. His was the life of the commonplace. Here was the usual round of eating and drinking, working, perhaps striving for a place, perhaps consumed with petty jealousies and struggles. He lived; he died. Like a door opening and shutting upon its hinges, nothing was accomplished. Like a ship plowing its way through the sea seems to displace much water and to create considerable motion, but when it has passed it leaves no mark upon the surface of the deep. They all had a whole life story told in an epitaph.

Enoch's is not the only one. There are other familiar and fine illustrations of this same truth. Let us examine briefly some of them.

"Noah, moved by godly fear, builded an ark." Briefly told, his is the story of heroic faith, of undaunted courage, of daring spiritual adventure. Here is a man who through 120 years was willing to be mocked, ridiculed, discounted, discredited. He had heard a voice. He would not deny it. He had seen a heavenly vision. He would not discredit it. He was

confronted with a herculean task. He did not refuse it. For 120 years he swam against the current, moved against the tide, stood against the mob, labored alone with the ridicule of his fellows for his only reward. They did not understand the thing that moved him. They could not appreciate his godly fear. Nevertheless, he built his ark to the saving of his house.

Of Moses it is said: *"The law came by Moses."* Does any man think that that was the accident of a sudden inspiration, or the quick output of unusual genius? A lifetime of preparation is necessary for one man to influence two millions of his fellows. The law would not have come by Moses but for forty years of loneliness and meditation in the wilderness. The law would not have come by Moses but for the burning bush in the wilderness and his reverential uncovering and silence in the presence of the voice that spake from the bush. The law could not have come by Moses had he not disciplined his own soul in the light of his own disastrous self-assertion in the matter of the slain Egyptian. The law came by Moses in the apprehension of the holiness of God, for he introduced the ten words

of the Mount with a higher, holier, far more significant word: "I am Jehovah thy God." Moses had come to recognize the personality of God as the moral constitution of the universe and sought to express in his Ten Commandments but the outcropping of righteousness from this eternal strata of holiness.

Again it is said of David: *"He served his generation and fell asleep."* To read the history of David again is but to be impressed anew with the all-comprehensiveness of this statement concerning him. He is introduced to us as a lad tending the flock of his father; as a youth challenging a right of the giant Goliath to intimidate the armies of the Lord; as a musician soothing the troubled mind of the unbalanced king. We see him in the wilderness protecting the flocks of Nabal. Here is a life of utter self-abnegation of one who will not put out his hand even to destroy Saul. Even when circumstances deliver him he will not advance himself even at the expense of his neighbor. He abdicates the throne rather than plunge his nation into civil war. He weeps for Absalom almost to the loss of his kingdom. He wrote songs and Psalms and gathered material for another to build the Temple. He

enriched all the life of his people as he enriched and consolidated the territory of their domain. He served his generation.

Passing into the New Testament, we find that it is written: *"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ."* And into that one statement we easily read the historic life, the stupendous labors of the man whose mind was an intellectual ocean from which many streams of thought flow out and to which for two thousand years all streams of theological thought have returned. Giving himself to persecutions, to loneliness, to wreck by sea, to betrayal by land, to making of himself of no reputation, counting his life not dear to himself, we see a man moved with such passion of love for his own that he is willing to be accursed to Christ for his kinsmen, his brethren, according to the flesh. We see one, the freest of all the free, voluntarily bound with chains that neither life nor death, things present, nor things to come, height nor depth, nor any other creature were able to lose.

From the pages of secular history came illuminating epitaphs of Nebuchadnezzar with the world empire, of whom it was written finally: *"When his heart was lifted up, . . .*

they took his glory from him." Here is a vision of senseless pride, of forgetfulness of God, of arrogance, self-sufficiency, vanity, and folly. Here is a Capernaum exalted to heaven, cast down to hell. Here is pride going before the final fall. Here is the breath of God blowing out the candle of life from the nostrils of a pretentious claimant to the throne of universal empire.

Again it is said: *Alexander conquered a world and wept.* Nothing could more perfectly display the brooding fires of his personality, weeping because there were no more worlds to be conquered, while the world conquered waited to be organized, waited for a constructive leadership that would liberate the peoples of the earth from the trammels and troubles of political slavery and of moral degradation.

So Caesar organized a Roman empire with such subtly revealed ambition and egotism that he could not escape the assassin's dagger.

So Washington, *"first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen,"* remains the outstanding American figure in spite of the dimness of the light of tradition in which his memory is enshrined.

Thus *Enoch walked with God* and was not, for God translated him. Thus, one great life challenging all the centuries since, and so shining across the centuries.

What will your record be? Suppose as your friend I should be called today to write your epitaph, to sum up in one brief sentence, such as God could approve, being truth, what your career has signified to the generation in which you live and those which follow you. What are you writing into history in the brief span given you to live and to influence your fellows?

There are some lessons which Enoch's life and walk with God set before us. They are lessons we would do well to learn and to remember.

ENOCH WAS CAREFUL ABOUT HIS COMPANIONS

How do I know? Because God was one of them. Therefore he could have no companionship out of harmony with God. When he walked with God he could not walk with some others. He could not be a companion of the profligate. There are some triangles that cannot exist. For instance, one man and one woman may live in perfect harmony in all the

beauties and joys of the marriage relation through ten, twenty, fifty years, but at any period bring in a second woman and the triangle breaks the harmony, destroys the unity, pulls down the fine structure of family and home life. Even so is it true that though God and one man may walk together in harmony, peace, fellowship and all its delights, if the man who walks with God undertakes to bring into that companionship a third, who will not walk with God, then the whole harmony of this blessed union is violated. Nothing is more certain than that intimate friendship or companionship with evil men in society or partnership with such men in business, or even mating with such in marriage, steals away the hearts from God. The loss of that fellowship begins with the loss of ideals, the lowering of the moral tone. It proceeds along the line of debased conversation and partnership in evil desires. We first walk in the way of the ungodly, then stand in the way of the sinners, and finally come to sit in the seat of the scoffing. Evil communications still corrupt good manners.

God's condemnation of Israel's leaders and His explanation of Israel's apostasy appears in the oft-repeated statement that "they

walked in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

It is for this imperative reason that the warning and invitation of God is: "Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing and I will receive you and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be unto me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

And you? What of your companions, your conversation, your associations and companionships, your conduct growing out of such associations and companionships? What influence, young man, are your companions having over you? How many of your decisions, young woman, are made under the constraint of your associations? If Enoch must be careful about his companions how much more care should you exercise over yours?

ENOCH WAS CAREFUL ABOUT HIS DIRECTIONS

A distinguished minister has said: "A man is governed by his assumptions," that is, by the premises upon which he predicates action. Direction determines destiny and direction is determined by decision.

Some time ago it was my privilege, like the earlier disciples, to go afishing. I was with a friend just below the great dam and power house built on the Mississippi River at Keokuk, Iowa. During the afternoon I proposed that we should fish downstream, and to my amazement my friend said: "But the fish cannot swim downstream."

"What! these fish, whose element is the water, who live in it and who disport themselves in it, cannot swim downstream?"

"Certainly not," my friend answered, "their gills are so constructed that they must swim against the stream, they must set themselves against the current, or be drowned in the very element that is life to them." What a lesson for you and me. We, too, must breast the current, swim against the stream, set ourselves in opposition to current opinion, if we would live. There is life and health and vitality only as we refuse the easy way downstream. There is a wealth of meaning in Hebrews 11:13-16:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make

it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. He did not need to move into Sodom. Sodom came out to embrace him and he lost his heart in Sodom. He lost his home, his happiness, his spiritual health, and as a result of Sodom he lost his testimony and left upon the pages of time a name tarnished with sin and shame.

When Balaam could not curse Israel for Balak, still wishing to gain the bribe offered him for the prostitution of his prophetic office, he simply turned Israel in Moab's direction and so brought the curse of God upon them.

Daniel was content to purpose in his heart not to defile himself with the king's dainties. He made the purpose of his heart determine the direction and character of his conduct.

So Enoch walked with God, that is, he went in God's direction, he kept step with God, neither outrunning Him nor lagging behind

Him. He held conversation with God on topics of mutual interest, though the conversation was always led by God. Oh, if I had the power I would write with indelible ink on the sensitive side of your conscience and your mind this question: As regards God what is your direction? Are you in step with him? Is your communion unbroken? Are you on praying ground? Are you still reading your Bible? What are you doing with your money and your influence? What about your pleasures and your friendships? Can God share them with you?

You wish to miss hell and reach heaven? Then what about the road you are traveling? Remember, that He has warned you: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." "The way of the cross leads home." There is no other way. There is no path of peace save the Via Dolorosa. If you walk with God you must walk His way and be ever remembering that your ways are not as His ways, that His ways are as high above your ways as the heavens are above the earth. "Therefore, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto

the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him and unto our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Finally:

ENOCH WAS CAREFUL OF CONSEQUENCES

He knew full well that "whatsoever a man sows that also shall he reap." I preached to you on that text last night. As I went home on the street car a man who had heard me came and sat down by me. He said: "You told the truth tonight. You observe that I am a little deaf. I do not hear perfectly. That is because in my youth I sowed the seeds of sin." Exactly! Enoch knew that it would profit a man little to gain the whole world and lose his own soul. You and I know it, too, if we would take account of it. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." It were well for us to beware to what thoughts and imaginations we give place in our lives.

Enoch knew, and we should know, that things do not just come right with God. They must be made right. He took account of the consequences of self-indulgence. Esau, hungry and tired, sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. With tears he afterwards sought to

change the mind of his father concerning the blessing he had forfeited, but he could not rue back his trade, he could not regain the lost heritage.

And Jesus said once: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." There must be much of self-emptying before there can be any of the divine filling.

ENOCH ALSO KNEW THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORANCE

It is no excuse for one not to know the will of God. Horace Bushnell, teaching in Yale, disputed in his classroom the Gospel being preached in New Haven by a minister conducting a mission. One day the minister went to Mr. Bushnell and said: "If you are wrong and I am right would not you like to know that?" Mr. Bushnell replied: "If I am wrong and you are right I should like to know it, but how can I?" Then the minister quoted to him the words of the Lord Jesus: "If any man willeth to do my will he shall know the teaching whether it be of God." Mr. Bushnell immediately answered: "Very well, then, I will do His will." Within a few days he

returned to his classroom and openly confessed that he had previously been mistaken, that God had revealed Himself and he now knew that his former agnosticism had been error. From that hour he sought to persuade men to be reconciled to God. If you do not know God's will as you voyage on life's uncertain sea, if you are not sure of direction, if you have no dial, no chart, no compass, you may at least set the sails of your soul for the winds of God's providence, and they will ever bear you on toward the harbor.

ENOCH KNEW THE CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY—THE HARDENING PROCESSES OF TIME AND AGE

He must have known something of the sudden taking off of those for whose careless feet the way gives out. He knew that there is a time and a place where God withdraws mercy. I once looked into the face of a man who for twenty-four years had poured out the tears of a broken heart because he was unable to believe, he was unable to repent. There had been an hour when God called and he had refused. Ever afterwards, with a heart broken in sorrow for his sin, and in yearning for God, he had sought a place of repentance

and found it not. He could weep but he could not believe for the saving of his soul. He could sorrow for his sins, but he found no place of rejoicing for sins forgiven. For his final, deliberate, and *eternal choice had been made,* perhaps reluctantly, perhaps flippantly, *but it had been made.* For more than two decades he had realized that that choice had been made. It was a heartbreaking business to talk with him.

There is perhaps today not enough preaching of that solemn warning contained in the lines of a song:

"There is a line by us unseen
That crosses every path;
The hidden boundary between
God's mercy and His wrath.

To cross that line is to die,
To die as if by stealth;
It does not quench the glowing eye,
Nor pale the bloom of health.

How long may man go on to sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does mercy end, and where begin
The confines of despair?

An answer from the skies is sent;
Ye who from God depart
Today, if you hear His voice, repent
And harden not your heart.

Do you know this? Cannot you realize the disastrous consequences of delay, of indecision, of evading issues, until some more convenient season, which never comes? How urgently God repeats the warning: "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

Life settles into its channels and sets in its directions. Morally and intellectually, as well as physically, hardening processes go on. The very will becomes inelastic and so unresponsive in the hour of opportunity, and life at last becomes one tragic experience of spiritual ebb and flow with nothing accomplished. To delay is to die. To delay is to be damned. Therefore, now enter in to life while you may. Catch step with God. Yield to His Spirit. Bend your will to His yoke. Submit to His hands the reins of the government of your life.

ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD AND FOUND HIS REWARD, FOR GOD TRANSLATED HIM

Heaven was the prize toward which he set his soul and he found the prize. For the

rewards of God are with Him, even as the Lord Jesus in His final promise to His waiting church said: "Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me." Oh, who would mind the journey if the way leads home?

This hope is set before us. God has given us certain promises. His presence with us the whole journey of life through is assured by two immutable things—His Word and His oath. We who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us are guaranteed safe conduct through the wilderness of the world. You will be reminded of that striking statement in Deuteronomy containing in itself a complete exposition of the Book of Exodus and the whole wilderness experience of Israel: "He brought us out that He might bring us in."

God does not launch His believing little ones upon a tideless sea without chart, compass, or pilot. He rather invites us to take voyage with Him and as we lift the anchor of faith and launch out upon life's uncharted sea with Him, the divine Saviour and Lord as Saviour and Pilot, it is in His blessed assurance that He will bring us safe home at last.

In this assurance He invites you today to

begin that fellowship with Him, the blessedness of which Enoch learned so long ago, and in the experience of which he lived his life in all its various aspects and contacts. Triumphantly thus defying the corroding effect of the centuries He brings to the memory of men in every age a name made glorious by his companionship with the Eternal. May the faith of his heart, and the fellowship of his life be yours today.

II

Cain and Abel—The Great Divide

Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

—Genesis 4:2.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

—I John 3:10-12.

THERE is an interesting story of a young Irishman, recently landed in America, traveling into the great Southwest to make his fortune. As his train on the T. N. O. P. pulled into the station at Meridian, Miss., a northbound express on the same road drew in on the track six feet away. Each train had ten minutes to wait. The young fellow looking out of the window of his car soon engaged in conversation an older man in the window of the oppo-

site car. After a little while he discovered that the older man was an Irishman from his home town back in Ireland who had come over years before and now, having made his fortune, was returning to his native land to live in ease. The youngster became so excited that he left his own car, stepped over to the other train, and sat down by the older man. The conversation proceeded. In the meantime the signal for departure was given and the two trains drew out of the station going in opposite directions. Faster and faster went the train. Then sudden realization of the motion came to the young fellow and he remarked to his companion: "Shure, and it is a great country. Here we are sitting side by each and each going the opposite way at fifty miles an hour." The story may not be true to facts but it naively expresses a philosophy all too current, that two men going in opposite directions may travel side by side. It cannot be done, for either the one will leave his course to follow the other, or both will be dragged out of the way to miss their course altogether.

Two men going in opposite direction may be together for a moment, the moment of passing, like ships at sea, but as the journey pro-

gresses they inevitably draw apart further and further. Two men governed by antagonistic principles, controlled by opposing relations, are like two men on the landing of a stairway. They are together for a moment but in reality they are as far apart as the top and the bottom of that stairway; since one is going up, the other is going down.

On the Western Canadian-United States border one passes a white stone marking the surface of the land. It is called The Great Divide. There, water falling, separates some to flow East, some to flow West. The drops of rain may fall out of the selfsame sky under the compulsion of the selfsame currents and forces, but from that one point of union they divide never to meet again, for part of that water flows east into the Atlantic through the great rivers and their tributaries while by the same agencies the other part flows west into the Pacific. Human lives are so divided. They may have the same original start, from one common point. For a time they have common experiences, but ultimately they separate on the great moral and spiritual divide, and one flows to a destiny of endless delight, the other to a destiny of eternal doom.

Cain and Abel came from the same family, but they found destinies as divergent as the eternities themselves. It may be that Mendel's law was in their lives applied to the moral and spiritual realm; that Cain took the characteristics of his mother and embodied in his life her attitude toward the word of God, and the provision of God for man's preservation: while Abel followed after his father. For one imagines that Eve never discerned her stupendous folly, or if discerning it she yet remained unrepentant of the fearful blunder which obtained for herself, her husband, and her posterity, the decree of banishment from the presence of the Great Companion. So, also, one imagines that Adam reluctantly followed the leading of his wife and grieved ever afterward for the lost companionship of the eternal Father; that he counted his loss of Eden the supreme loss. Perhaps Abel inherited from him the best and holiest of his aspirations and impulses. At any rate, those two children of the same parentage turned to divergent paths at the altar on which God required the offering in symbol of a substitutionary atonement.

We of this day, understand that Jesus the Lamb of God, provided to take away the sin

of the world, is humanity's supreme issue. He is the Great Divide from whom men take their course. They part at His cross, some going toward heaven, some tending toward hell.

He separates men as regards their relation to God. He is none the less the great social Divider. He makes a man's foes those of his own household. He separates chiefest friends. He himself becomes so supreme an issue that men can neither ignore nor evade Him. From Him eternal destinies take source.

TWO BROTHERS

We cannot escape the conviction that while Cain and Abel were without doubt historic personages, they are equally beyond doubt symbolic characters. From their lives spiritual lessons of gravest import may be learned and warnings against disaster and irreparable loss may be obtained.

The two men were alike. They had the same ancestry. They were born to the same family privileges. If there be anything in the idea of transmission of moral characteristics, then those two boys had access to the same fountain of virtue. Memories of divine fellowship; experiences of divine mercy; con-

versations with that wondrous Visitor from heaven; truths, convictions, moral integrities born of the divine parentage, must have been some of the spiritual sediment that settled in the lives of the sons of Adam and Eve.

They had the same environment. For each of them the gardens were laden with the perfume of flowers and the aroma of spices; the same song birds trilled their deep-throated lays; the same zephyrs blew softly from the southland; the same fields and forests stretched out before their wondering and admiring gaze; above them the same canopy of heaven spread the blue vaulted dome from which the twinkling stars irradiated their diamond lights telling of the handiwork of the eternal Creator, proclaiming at once his majesty and his power.

The same fortune favored them both. The fields yielded their fatness; the orchards their fruits; the sweat of their faces provided bread for their mouths and all necessities for their physical life. Flocks provided food and clothing, and missing the rigors of any northern clime their open air lives sent streams of healthy blood coursing through their veins.

They had the same companions; the same

conversations cheered their hearts; the same discussions stimulated their minds; the same social impulses gave them opportunity for self-expression along the delightful lines of human fellowship.

Their educational opportunities were the same. Whatever of education they had, one did not exceed the other in opportunity, or privilege. The same sources of original investigation were open to them each under the same parental teachers. Each had access to the one divine Teacher. Life was teeming with mysteries. The whole world was a schoolroom calling out their individual faculties.

Without doubt they had the same religious setting. They knew of other days in which fellowship with the divine Friend had been unbroken, direct, and personal. They must have heard again and again the tragic story of their banishment from Eden told into their keenly curious ears; of the presence of the altar; the demand for the bloody sacrifice; of the significant falling of fire from above consuming it. These truths could not have failed to make their deep and lasting impressions upon the plastic minds of the boys of this historic first family.

Also they had the same ability to choose and the same responsibility of choice. The altar made its appeal even as it brought its demand. The flock with its willing and silent victim waited them. Beyond the altar God waited, ready to welcome the repentant sinner and to justify his believing children.

Upon the high plateau of life they looked out toward the City Celestial and the rocky pathway of that upward climb on the one side; upon the far-away City of Destruction, hazy in the distance, and the long, pleasant, flower-strewn way downward by easy stages thereto. And from that plateau of life they must decide each for himself which way he will take. Perhaps they did not apprehend as thoroughly as we may the terrible truth that *direction determines destiny;* that moral choices indicate moral tendencies; that "the set of the soul decides its goal."

The two men were unalike. Perhaps they were unalike in physical characteristics. Certainly they were unalike in tastes.

Cain was a farmer. We cannot doubt that he was a farmer by choice; that his occupation fitted his inclination. Likewise and for the same reason Abel was a shepherd.

These two men were unalike in their attitude to themselves. One was self-sufficient, confident. He had no personal, acknowledged conscious sense of sin. He was the type of man who did the best he could and let it go at that. He did not concern himself with regretful past actions. He was slow to acknowledge his own mistakes. Arrogant in the assertion of his self-sufficiency. There are a multitude of such—content with themselves.

Cain was the original Pharisee; thanking God that he was not as other men; telling and retelling his virtues to all willing or unwilling listeners; offering to God, if He were willing to accept it, with some degree of complacency and not a little of patronage, the fruits of his own righteousness. Cain was the original pattern of the man of Revelation 3:17, who said: "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing"; and knew not that he was the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked. And he could not hear the divine injunction to buy of God gold refined by fire that he might become rich; and white garments that he might clothe himself, and that the shame of his moral nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve

to anoint his eyes, that he might see. So satisfied was he that he stumbled on, blind, poor, naked, to his doom of eternal banishment from the presence of God, whom he sought to patronize with an offering symbolic of his own filthy rags of righteousness.

The other man was a man of great humility. He could neither see nor depend upon his own personal merit. No self-assertion, no pride of achievement marred his life. He thought of himself in relation to God in the very language of Job: "Thou exacteth of me less than mine iniquity deserves." With David he stood ready to cry through the fast-flowing penitential tears: "Cleanse thou me from secret sins; wash me thoroughly."

They were unalike in their attitude to God. Both were religious after their own choices. Cain evidently based his religion upon reason. What more could be desired, or demanded of any man? Here is he—thrifty, industrious, prosperous, reverential. He believes in God and worships according to his own understanding, but he could not understand the wisdom of God which provides salvation of free grace and gives eternal life to those who believe, which counts faith for righteousness alike to

Abraham the friend of God, and to the dying thief crying for mercy upon a cruel Roman cross. He had never listened to the counsels of his heart that he must not lean upon his own understanding, or that the wisdom of the world could not know God, or that the carnal man could not become subject to the will of God. In the pride of his self-complacency of intellect and of character he must, as he does, utterly reject that revelation which demands the Lamb of God to take away sin. Perfectly logically he is in rebellion against God who requires such an atonement.

Abel, on the other hand, was the first Publican, smiting upon his breast, not daring to lift up his eyes, crying out under the weight of his personal conviction of sin: "God be merciful to me the sinner." He was quite able to anticipate and accept the revelation of Romans 3:21-31 that "apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested"; that a man is therefore justified by faith apart from the works of the law. He was quite willing to accept the blessed redemption embodied in the divine proclamation: "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God." So he

brings the slain lamb to the altar and the fire of God falls upon the altar and the sinner is accepted with his bleeding sacrifice as substitute, offering atonement for his sins.

I think the best confession of faith in the Lord Jesus I have ever heard was that of an old man who, after forty-two years of a vain search for the peace of God, publicly declared in one of my congregations that he had at last found the "peace that passeth all understanding." *He said he had found that peace at the place where he consented to God's estimate of his sin and God's estimate of His Son.* That was the way Abel found peace, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Paul, and John, and all the saints from Abel down to this hour.

THESE TWO MEN WERE SEPARATED

Even while they lived together they lived apart. They were *separated by a bridgeless chasm of choice.* The one walked on one side the river of life, the one on the other. And as the stream in its fast-flowing current moved outward their ways diverged more and more till at last in the years of their manhood there was no crossing from one side to the other.

It was my privilege once to see a husband face the fact, to him intolerably tragic, that his wife's conversion and confession of the Lord Jesus Christ had separated them; that she could never recross the chasm of unbelief to his side. They had lived together for fifteen years, without even a ripple of discontent or discord. But suddenly her faith in Christ erected the Great Divide and their lives began to flow in eternally different directions. It was with a kind of panic that he flung himself upon the mercy of God and cried for the privilege of crossing to her side of the stream of life. It was my joy that God did not deny him and I saw them take up the path of life again together and move on in a higher, better, holier fellowship of life and love than they had ever known.

These two men, Cain and Abel, *were separated by the mutual repulsion of expanding character.* Each man attracted to himself and surrounded himself with the things in consonance with his character. Friends, pleasures, interests, activities, entered in, one after another to wedge them apart. Thus parents and children are separated, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. Nothing in

common in the realm of the spiritual life! The cross has become to them the Great Divide. Oh, the tragedy of it! They meet the same people, sit around the same fireside. They talk together and walk together. Sometimes they weep at the same graves, but they are separated by their direction toward the eternal destinies involved in their faith and unbelief. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?"

Yes, *they are separated by the eternal destiny* determined by separate and different directions. Each reaches his goal. Abel was saved, though he was slain. Cain was lost, though he lived to build a city and establish a civilization. They were saved and lost when they determined their direction. For one brief space the circumference of the circle and the tangent from the circle are together. But never again. They each move in their appointed directions further and further apart. It was thus with Lazarus and Dives. It will be thus with those who, according to Matthew 25:31, hear the voice of the Great Shepherd at the last day saying: "Depart from me into everlasting punishment": or, "Come ye blessed of my Father into everlasting joys."

Eternity! Eternity!! Eternity!!! Where will you spend Eternity? Remember that your choice determines your direction, and your direction determines your destiny. So now set your soul's direction toward God. Make choice now! Accept God's provision for your sins. Yield your soul now to the wooings of the Holy Spirit as He gently urges you, "Son, give me thy heart."

III

Esau and Jacob—The Two Brothers

I have loved you, saith Jehovah. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob; but Esau I hated, and made his mountains a desolation, and gave his heritage to the jackals of the wilderness.

—*Malachi 1:2-3.*

See also *Romans 4:10* and *Romans 11:5-6.*

IT IS WELL to inject here the discussion of two other characters who would chronologically stage a later appearance. But chronology must sometimes give place to logic and very frequently yield priority to the necessities of experience. The histories of Esau and Jacob furnish striking parallel to that of Cain and Abel, though the tragedy of their differences took different forms in their final expression. In each case there stands out in sharp contrast the carnal and the spiritual as the underlying principle governing life. In each case the final responsibilities of personal choice and final determinations of direction in fixing destiny appear.

Esau and Jacob were twins, born not only of the same mother and father, but of the same environment and the same providence of God. In the very hour of their birth that strange struggle for supremacy is revealed which occurs all the way through human history in the struggle unto death between the flesh and the spirit.

Imagination easily pictures the children in Rebekah's tent, the boys inquisitive among the retinue of the caravan; the young men beginning those strange stirrings of individuality that must forecast the taking of moral initiative and the assertion of personality in the realm of moral responsibility in the tribe and in all the tribal relations manifest on the fields of Syria or the plains of Arabia.

Life develops with equal step along its uneven way. It falters and fails under the discouragements of environment, the discouragements of unsolved perplexities of life and of the daily temptations ere it soars on wings of triumphant courage.

Life in its kaleidoscopic changes has such a varying aspect and such a variety of colors that each generation thinks its own hour of action and destiny the most challenging of all.

But since each succeeding generation has felt that, the probable truth is that for the men of every generation, life as it must be lived under their circumstances and in their environment, is crammed full with those challenges that can rise under nothing else than the fact that man in all his life's relations is but expressing somehow a fundamental relation to God, who is the source of life and to whom life's ultimate answer must be made.

Of course, when one has reached that point in thinking, he is at once confronted with the necessity of determining somehow the condition under which life's relation to God is determined and expressed. Strange as it may seem, it is at this point that the whole question of divine sovereignty and human free agency clamors for expression and for settlement. It is for that reason that the particular text has been chosen and that the thoughts of this message are presented. In other words, I am here undertaking to present not the lessons of the outward life of Esau and Jacob but a deeper, far more fundamental thing, even the spring of action, the control and governing principle underlying conduct, the motive inherent in associations. In this connection

both fatalism and faith require their day in court and it is for that purpose I bid you give heed.

There are many fatalists in the world. Not a few men charge God with responsibility for all things in heaven and in earth, including sin and the sinner's choice to continue in sin. Now fatalism is a dreadful disease, the result of a disordered spiritual experience. Whether that fatalism be expressed in hopeless terms of resignation to the movements of implacable force or in the devitalized submission to the misconceived arbitrariness of divine sovereignty.

I once dealt with a man under conviction of sin who seemed to understand God's provision for sin and his offer of the free gift of eternal life, yet his only answer to my urgent invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord was: "It has not come to me yet." Over and over with vain and useless repetition to every argument, renewed invitation, or appeal, that lifeless, hopeless, paralyzing response: "It has not come to me yet."

Satan had persuaded him to an attitude of passivity; had robbed him even of belief in his own responsibility to take any mental or moral

initiative. The man was doomed and damned by his own mental and moral inhibitions.

Another form fatalism takes is found in the answer of some to whom the invitation of the Gospel comes: "I do not feel it." In the presence of God's grace they erect a barrier which they permit nowhere else in all the experiences of life. They will not deal with facts. They refuse any action on the ground that they have not certain internal emotions in consonance with what others have described in their experience of conversion. *These also insist upon having the feeling which belongs after conversion, come to them before conversion.*

Others drift along expecting some vital revolutionary experience without regard to their own moral faculties; that is, without reference to what they learn, desire, or choose seemingly with no thought of responsibility for the exercise of their moral faculties—mind, heart, will.

Let it be understood at the very first, therefore, that the call of God requires the keenly alert exercise of every moral faculty to lay hold on life eternal. Whatever else the doctrine of election may or may not mean, it

certainly does not mean that God has made man a puppet, deprived him of the power of responsibility of choice, paralyzing his faculties with a fatally debilitating necessity of passivity. It does not mean that God arbitrarily forces one man to eternal life and another to eternal death. There are too many urgent warnings and invitations of God in His Word, such as that contained in Hebrews 4:1, for us ever again to consent to a conception of election that makes God an arbitrary autocrat in the realm of the moral faculties and leaves man without moral responsibility.

"Let us fear, therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it."

THE ELECTIVE PURPOSE OF GOD

The elective purpose of God declares in one breath the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Here are two facts that can never be divorced as long as man remains a creature made in the image of God. As long as man has the power to think, he can never be robbed of the moral responsibilities of his relation to God any more than God can lose the moral responsibility of His relation to man.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

God makes sovereign selection of a seed, a race, a family, a nation, a tribe, and a Kingdom of the Messiah. This elective selection of God is easily traceable throughout the Scriptures. The pathway of divine providence is clearly marked through all the pages of human history from Seth to Shem, to Abraham, to Israel, to Judah, to the House and dynasty of David. And the succession upon that throne upon which the seed of David shall sit in unending power and glory is a clearly marked path of promise and prophecy. But any careful student of the Bible must know that into this pure stream of God's elective purpose He also poured the blood of Rahab the harlot, of Tamar the harlot, and of Ruth the Moabitess, so that both the Gentile world and the world of sinners are included in the elect line. Nor do I hint that their inclusion tainted the pure blood of the chosen line. Rather did it enrich that blood, for by its very inclusion God has already laid His foundation for His later "whosoever will." Great, indeed, is the mystery of godliness, and no human mind can compass all the difficulties involved in the facts of God's sovereign election, but it

is evident that the elective purpose of God is an election of provision. There is the case of Esau and Jacob. It is indeed said: "Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated." But you cannot read the tenth chapter of Romans without understanding that this word indicates a divine provision for man's salvation entirely apart from man's merit, or from any circumstances of his birth or later condition in life. The salvation in Christ is not to be given to a few favored, who are naturally good, who live in good environment, and are the favored and petted darlings of fortune. God is no respecter of persons. God looks upon a lost world—a lost race of men, and provides salvation. He sends forth His heralds to point men to the way. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come: whosoever heareth let him say come; Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. It is as if He had opened one oasis in the midst of the Sahara; had put up signposts in all directions directing toward this one well of water and then had sent out guides to turn the caravans along the paths that lead to the water

and to life. They told everywhere that direction determines destiny, and gave promise that all who follow direction to the well may drink and live. Yet many in the wilderness way disregard the signposts, give no heed to the voice of the guides, turn their feet to other paths, put their dependence and trust and hope in some mirage of the desert and perish through their own folly.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

Let no man think that the sovereignty of God relieves him of responsibility; that God will take the elect by the nape of the neck and lift them into heaven. Men are not borne into heaven by the heavenly Father as a cat carries her young from house to house. Rather He deals with His people as the eagle with her young. He stirs up the nest. He disquiets the conscience. He arouses the soul. He sends upon them the pains and pangs of conviction of sin. He may visit them with disaster, robbing them of health or fortune, taking away from them their friends, overwhelming them with a sense of their utter helplessness and loneliness, mingling with the discipline of his judgments just enough of the

grace of his mercy to enable them to bear the strain of their discipline, while learning the lesson of their faith. For God is faithful. "He will not permit you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with every temptation make also a way of escape that you may be able to endure it." So as the eagle on the brow of the precipice, or on the top of some lonely pine, stirs up the nest, drives the young out to try their wings, hovers over them, sweeps under them, bears them up when it seems inevitable that they shall fall to their death, till by the ministry of the mother's mercy and wisdom they are able to bear themselves upon their own pinions, so God robbing men of all false dependence, delivering them from confidence in self or circumstances, reveals to them his constant presence, his unfailing grace, and offers them the perpetual salvation of faith strong enough to bear them on its wings back to God.

The whole history of the chosen ones shows that the elect were a stiff-necked, stubborn, disobedient, and gainsaying people. More than that, they were too often weak, vacillating, immoral, utterly unworthy, in their natural state, of any place in the divine economy.

Take, for instance, Jacob, whose path through life showed his character as that of a sneak, betraying every trust, proving himself unworthy in every situation. How could he fit into God's plan? It is impossible that he should until, in the providence and provision of God as he faces entrance into the promised land, he is humbled and in his humility takes hold upon the nature of God and is born again, Jacob the Supplanter thereby becoming Israel the Prince.

Sovereign election provides the water the famishing sinner must drink. But the sinner must drink. Sovereign election offers the sinner medicine to cure his sickness, but the sick man must take his medicine. Let it never be forgotten that Esau sold his birthright and repented in vain, and sought in vain, for changed conditions under which he might keep his blessing, but found no change of mind in his father when once he had cast the die of his own choice. Let it also be remembered that Jacob is not allowed in the land of promise till he yields himself wholly to God and discarding all his own self-sufficiency goes limping and leaning upon the staff of divine blessing.

THE ELECTIVE GRACE OF GOD

An elective purpose without an elective grace would be a horrible doctrine. Here is not the hardness and unreasonableness of an autocrat. Rather here is the tenderness of a compassionate father. The doctrine of election of God rebukes the sinner's sin in all its forms, and it rebukes all sinners who love and cherish their sins, *for sin is set against the sovereignty of God.* It would put Satan on the throne of God. How horrible is sin! How great God's elective grace! In Christ God has provided the Lamb slain before times eternal to take away the sin of the world. Here is an open fountain for cleansing. Here is the offer of pardon and empowering. The sovereign grace of God declares that there is no further excuse for men to go on in sin. Salvation is offered and all the means for its attainment are provided. There is the gospel message proclaiming the conditions of salvation, heralded by a suitable messenger, under favorable circumstances and influences, added to the drawing of the divine Holy Spirit.

The climax of the elective grace of God is the sovereign enabling of the Holy Spirit. The three Hebrew children about to be cast

into the furnace for their worship of Jehovah, refusing to surrender their allegiance to Him in the face of threatened disaster, told Nebuchadnezzar: "Our God is able to deliver us." That is the conviction born of divine grace in the heart of the believing, though helpless and hopeless sinner.

AN ELECTION ACCORDING TO CHOICE

"Wherefore, make your calling and election sure." Lay hold upon eternal life! The urgency of God is in every Gospel invitation. The angels took Lot and his family by the hand and urged them to hasten out of Sodom. The goodness and the mercy of God lead to repentance. "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out." Remember that word was written at the conclusion of the argument for divine sovereignty. Paul tells the Philippians in the face of their dire needs: "My God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in Christ Jesus." What more can he say? With your need before Him He has made provision for your salvation. In the realization of your responsibility of choice and

leaning upon the promise of his enabling—choose, choose, choose now! There is not a moment to be lost. We dare not face the risk of delay. Even now, today, while it is offered, harden not your heart.

The wisdom of the old Negro cannot be surpassed when upon being asked for an explanation of the doctrine of election he replied: "All the time God is voting for you, Satan is voting against you. The election will go whichever way you yourself vote." May God give you wisdom for a right vote this hour.

IV

Noah—A Fool for Christ's Sake

But Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah.
—*Genesis 6:8.*

See also *Hebrews 11:7.*

NOAH lived in a world very much like our world. For him as for us temptations arose out of religion so broad as to have no practical value. It was illustrated in the case of Cain, who, though he worshiped, persisted in presenting his own righteousness and the fruits of his own labor as the sole indication of his reverence for God and his realization of any claim from God upon him.

Temptations also arose in that day, as in this day, from mixed marriages. The sons of God married the daughters of men. That is, the line of Seth persisted in intermarrying with the line of Cain, rebellious though they were and marked with a curse of separation from God.

In Noah's day, as in this, business, commerce, art, and society were essentially godless.

Lamech, the seventh from Adam along the line of Cain, had three sons and one daughter. Of his three sons one was the inventor of the artisan's tools, one the inventor of musical instruments, and one the originator of segregated community life in the pursuit of the cattle business, which has made so vast a number of men rich and self-sufficient in the history of the world. His one daughter added the feminine touch to life so that his family presents to the world the aspect of commerce, art, and community life or society. But it was commerce without God, art without God, and society without God. From this godless expression of life arose all the evils then to afflict the world, and to afflict it now under similar conditions.

Temptations arose also from utter materialism and worldliness wherein God was crowded beneath the threshold of consciousness. It is declared in Genesis 6:3: "And Jehovah said, "My Spirit shall not always rule in man, for in their going astray they are flesh." (A. S. R. V.)

In Matthew 24:37-39 the Lord Jesus turns the searchlight of His own divine revelation upon that day in his own judicial interpreta-

tion thereof: "And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man." No picture of gross materialism could be more hideous, nor any more true to life than that.

From the foregoing it easily appears that Noah's generation had lost the consciousness of God, the consciousness of sin, and the consciousness of immortality in utter abandonment to their fleshly appetites and worldly ambitions. They lived for this life and this life alone. They felt no drawing of heaven upon their souls. No conscious spiritual illumination lightened the dark worldliness of their minds. Their great temptation and sin was the great temptation and sin of this generation—the temptation to and the sin of conformity to this world, to the will of its god, to the indulgences of its appetites, to the desires of the flesh and to the vainglory of its life. Therefore Noah has a message for us. Let us see if we can find it. To read the

story of this singular man is to discern the fact that

HE SAW ONE WHO IS INVISIBLE

Seeing Him who is invisible, his life was neither ego-centric nor geo-centric, but profoundly and consciously theo-centric. That is, he made neither himself nor his world the center about which his life must rotate, but seeking first the Kingdom of God he adjusted his life in all its contacts to the one supreme relation of his soul to God.

Noah kept alive his consciousness of God in his marriage. It is significantly said in Genesis 6:9 that "Noah was a righteous man perfect in his generations." Seemingly he stood alone in his generation for the unmixed purity of family life. He married of the chosen seed of the line of Seth. He built his family life with an eye single to the covenant promises of God. He could not bear the thought of the taint of Cain in the blood of his children.

In the manner of his life also Noah demonstrated his ever-present consciousness of God, for it is said that like Enoch, Noah walked with God. Herein we again discern that *direction determines destiny.*

He was obedient to his heavenly vision and dared for one hundred and twenty years to pursue the path which was lighted only by his own consciousness of the sovereign will of God for his life. Nowhere else was the consciousness of God in his life more profoundly alive and in evidence than in the building of the ark and the taking of refuge in it for himself and his family, and the animals, clean and unclean, which in obedience to the heavenly mandate he herded therein.

One other evidence there is of his consciousness of God. Noah builded an altar and worshiped thereat.

Thus he became the heir of a righteousness which is according to faith. Here was a man dominated by the inner consciousness of God. The Holy Spirit tells us in Hebrews 11:7 that Noah "being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." There is a little understood and rarely appreciated word in Isaiah 42:19 to which the servant of God would do well to give heed. It is indeed somewhat diffi-

cult of interpretation, but I insert it herein with an interpretation that has at least challenged my own soul. "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant. Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his eyes are open, but he heareth not. It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness' sake, to make the teaching great and glorious." Here is a picture of the man whose horizon was so filled with the vision of God, whose heart was so enamored with the great and glorious law of God, whose life was so taken up with doing the will of God, that he had no consciousness of the clamoring world about him, who though he saw the grandeur and glory that moved other men to an idolatrous disregard of God, he did not observe these things as having any relation to himself nor permit them in any wise to influence his standards or his conduct. It is that vision that has kept the men of God steady and true, steadfast and faithful, through all the centuries, with the testing of their varying experiences.

There was Joseph in Potiphar's house, sorely tempted by the seductive woman and

by the difficult circumstances of his life and by the apparently hopelessness of his situation, betrayed by his friends, the plaything of an outrageous fortune, seemingly forgotten of God, but in obedience to his heavenly vision, his inner consciousness of God, he could answer the temptress: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Thus Uzziah the king of Israel "set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah who gave instruction in the seeing of God."

Thus Isaiah at the end of the splendid reign of Uzziah the king, lamenting the social, political, and commercial corruption of his nation, suddenly has a vision and comes into possession of a God-consciousness that dominated and determined his life and his prophetic ministry through all his remaining years:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. . . . Then I said, Here am I; send me."

Every American business man should know

of Thomas Foster and his experience with the rebate iniquities. He was invited into the conference of the first group who planned, and later operated, the railroad freight rebate scheme. At the close of that conference it is said that Mr. Foster declined to sign the agreement until, in accordance with an understanding with his wife, they should have opportunity to talk it over together and mutually agree about it. Mr. Foster returned to his mid-western home and in the quiet of their evening together laid the whole scheme before Mrs. Foster, pointed out to her the tremendous wealth which would probably accrue to them and others who were party to it, and waited for her decision. It was not long in coming. She said: "Tom, we will not go into the scheme." Amazed, indeed somewhat dumbfounded, he said: "And why not?" Her simple answer was: "Because of God." Ah, what an answer! "Because of God" they endured together the strain and stress of the succeeding years of conflict and competition. "Because of God" they were delivered time and again from threatened disaster. "Because of God" they were finally established upon a firm foundation of business prosperity

so that Mr. Foster was able twenty years later to say before an investigation committee from the United States Congress that in the building of his fortune he had never received one dollar in freight rebates from American railroads. They had seen Him who is invisible, and had ordered their lives by practicing the presence of God.

FAITH VS. REPUTATION

Noah cared more for his faith than he did for his reputation. In that he was not unlike his Master, for it is written of Jesus that He made Himself of no reputation. Which does not mean that He did not acquire reputation, but that as fast as he acquired it He threw it away. He disregarded the social, commercial, and political rulers and their opinions of him. Ever thrusting Himself into places of peril, he neglected any appeal to prudence. He spent no time either in building or strengthening his fences. He did not give place to himself. Thus Paul declares that he with his friends became a fool for Christ's sake. Noah succeeded in making himself a fool for one hundred and twenty years. Because of this folly, measured by the judgment of his gen-

eration, he had to stand alone. The crowd was all going the other way. He was the only man in the world who saw and believed as he did. Through every succeeding generation Noah has therefore put to shame the man who is only able to stand with the crowd, the timid soul afraid of the crowd. Without doubt Noah was as sensitive as any one of them, but he had not only to stand alone, he had to stand out in the open. God put him to building an ark where everybody could see. There was no hiding, no camouflaging, no misunderstanding the thing he was doing. Thus God calls every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ into contact with his cross and makes him a spectacle unto men and to angels. There is no escaping publicity in any real discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Noah had to meet just the opposition you have to meet today, with the difference that the whole world was against him. You have many who stand with you when you stand for God and His righteousness. Noah's friends doubtless called him a crazy fool, a religious fanatic, a sectarian bigot, an ignoramus, a man of benighted mind. Why did he persevere against the crowd? How did he stand the

opposition? The answer is not far to seek. "He endured as seeing him who is invisible." Being moved of God concerning things not yet seen he prepared an ark.

Thus Galileo, convinced of the Copernican theory, though stretched upon a rack till in mortal pain he recanted his assertion, when he was liberated, staggered to his feet, saying under his breath, "But it does move for all that."

And how is it with you? Do you save your face at any cost? Are you, like poor Peter, forever seeing the wind on the troubled sea? Are you frightened at the sneering voice of a maid? Are you constrained to warm yourself at the enemy's fire? Are you silent before the ridicule of His enemies? Are you forever fearful of losing your job or your friends, or your place, or your pleasure in society? Jesus warns you. Make no mistake. "Whosoever renounceth not all that he hath cannot be my disciple."

Noah shouts a word of warning and encouragement across the centuries to the scholars and students of this generation. You, too, will lose Christ if you save your reputation for wisdom and knowledge, but remember:

"He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for Christ's sake shall save it."

Finally:

NOAH PREPARED AN ARK

He prepared in advance. He got ready before the event. He bought his ticket and made his reservation before the train started.

An Irishman who came panting up to the railroad station just too late to catch his train was offered the comfort of a bystander, who said, "You did not run quite fast enough." In great indignation the Irishman replied: "Shure and you are a liar. I ran as hard as I could. I did not start soon enough."

There is the terrible parable of the Virgins. Five wise took oil in their vessels and at the hour that the bridegroom came they were ready to go in. Five foolish found no place in the wedding party because they had made no preparation in advance. Jesus said at the last many who have made no preparation will say: "Lord, open to us." But the door will be shut and He will answer from within: "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Doubtless Noah's neighbors were accus-

tomed to say with an urge of the elbow or a wink of the eye: "Even if Noah is right about the flood, he is losing a lot of mighty good times. There is plenty of time."

A little while ago a young woman who had long settled that she intended to become a Christian in her old age, wrote in a note to me: "Today I suddenly realized that I might never grow old. I must make my preparation now." That wisdom came from the Spirit of God.

How lovingly, yet how urgently Jesus warns: "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Procrastination is still the thief of time. The many warnings of God against waiting should be given heed to. Noah's generation went on sinning flippantly, unmindful of God's warnings until the day when Noah entered the ark.

NOAH ACCEPTED GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

He builded an ark, not a raft; not a tower; not a house on the mountain top. He builded an ark after God's pattern. No doubt his fellow citizens thought the whole scheme unreasonable and far too rigorous. They were ready for anything else but what God provides

and demands. This was the very same attitude of Naaman the Syrian in his answer to Elisha: "Why must I wash in this Jordan? Are not the rivers of Syria better?" Oh, for some wise counselor to give instruction in the way of wisdom. Why not wash and be clean? Why not enter the ark and be saved?

It is well for you to know concerning your own salvation that all rests in the Lord Jesus, for there is none other name given under heaven and among men whereby you must be saved. But if He is the *only One* He is the *able One.* "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Eternity urges you. Believe today!

V

Abraham—The Man with the Longest Shadow

And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.

—*Genesis 15:6.*

See also *Hebrews 11:8-10.*

ABRAHAM is the man who cast the longest shadow across the pages of history. Such a shadow we call reputation. Fame is the silhouette of character cast upon the screen of history on the stage of time. Reputation, or fame, is to some extent the measure of influence. Abraham has the longest and largest place in the world. No other man has towered so high. No other man has been so familiar a figure to so many centuries and so many peoples. No other man is more deserving of the place accredited to him. He was one of the first real men who dared obedience to a heavenly vision. He was the greatest of the pioneers in righteousness. The very vitality of his reputation declares that he was

no myth but a real honest human being with the experiences and trials in joy and sorrow common to our humanity. His shadow is too substantial a thing for us ever to discredit the substance of his reality.

Half the human race after nearly three thousand years look back to him as either their physical or spiritual progenitor. Why?

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time."

But Abraham has more than greatness and more than achievement to offer in explanation of the unending stream of influence flowing forth from him. Isaiah came nearer revealing the truth about him when he wrote: "A man shall be as a shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He lifted his broad and substantial strength between lesser men and the enslaving traditions, the blighting currents of opinion, the devastating drift of worldliness, so that behind him as shelter they have caught a new life's spiritual vision, have regained the courage to renew the conflict against evil and have recharged their lives with the inspiration

needed for heroic undertaking. Paul does not hesitate to set himself before the church as an example to its members even as Christ was the great Example for us all, so we need not refuse to use Abraham.

Why was Abraham so great? Why does his shadow lengthen without losing substance through the centuries? Certainly there are some reasons to be discerned.

He was rich with the fabulous riches of the East. The cattle on a thousand hills were his. He was a mighty sheik of the desert, commanding the services of a great retinue and holding possession of a great inheritance, but it was not because of his riches that he was great. Others have had more wealth. Others have occupied more strategic positions for the employment of wealth. There are names that cannot be written except as they are embroidered in gold. There are Crœsus, and Rothschild, and Morgan, and a host of others who have commanded, or do command, millions of money and influence among their fellows with the dominance of plutocratic power. But they died to be forgotten in the councils of their fellows with the distribution of the wealth which other hands were not

strong enough to hold and which they could not take away with them when they left the world.

Abraham was a warrior, the master of strategy, a bold, fearless commander, a military genius, though not often employing his powers in military service. But Abraham was not great because of his warfare. Dozens of great military heroes and geniuses have outrun him in the annals of war and have outshone the luster of his name on its pages. There was Alexander, and Cyrus, and Napoleon, and Bismarck, and Washington, and Lee, and Grant, but these have gained no substance in their greatness to change the current of history, or direct the later human courses of succeeding centuries.

Abraham was a pioneer, but it was not because of his adventurous spirit or his discoveries of a new land and his residence therein that he has outlasted the centuries. Columbus was a great discoverer; the pioneering developments of Boone and Clark opened a greater territory to the settlement of their fellows than Abraham ever saw. But these names are not as familiar to the minds of men as is Abraham's.

He married a beautiful woman, so beautiful and so great of spirit that she was called the Princess, but it was not because of his romance that he became great. He built no Taj Mahal. He did not enshrine his romance in pages of poetry as did the Brownings. He had no inspired records of love's wooing and the tragedies of its sorrows as did Jacob and Rachel, but his romance, like theirs, ended with a grave and has had small influence on the love-making of the world.

He was the friend of kings, but it was not his association with the great that made him great.

"Princes and potentates may flourish or may fade.
A breath can make them as a breath has made."

Abraham was the friend of God. He believed God and God counted it to him for righteousness. He gave him fellowship with Himself on that ground. It was because he linked his life on to God and dared to abandon all for the fellowship he found with God that he stands towering head and shoulders over all the ancients, and, still casting his shadow

before the forward moving feet of the succeeding generation, has shared the fellowship of each.

John by the Spirit writes in his Gospel that Jesus said that Abraham had seen the day of Christ and rejoiced in "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

In other words, Abraham had sensed the Incarnation and believing had found by faith a fellowship friendship with God in Him, the Incarnate One.

Now since that is the purpose of the Gospel call, it will be of very great benefit and inspiration to us to study the stages of progress in Abraham's faith.

First, then:

HE HEARD THE CALL OF GOD

He heard the call of God and came as far as his family would come with him. Whether his first move was upon his own moral initiative or that of his father, I do not know. Whether the vision splendid came first to him; whether it was his ears that heard first the call of God, I am not certain, for it is written in Genesis 11:31: "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran . . . and went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan: and they came unto Haran and dwelt there." But, at any rate, *he heard the call of God.* The language is a little uncertain. The call seems to have come first to the whole family. At any rate, so clear, strong, and insistent was it that the whole family was lifted out of its ancient setting and moved forward to a new environment under its impetus. We are not informed as to how that call came. It may have been the scourge of conscience roused to a sensitive arraignment of the futility and fatality of idolatry. Possibly a burdened desire for the forgiveness of some great sin led him to turn his face toward the one light as he groped through the darkness of a terrible experience.

It may have been the result of long meditation wherein his soul reached out into infinity in his search after truth, or some angel clothed with light and speaking the language of mortals may have appeared first as he guided his flock in the wilderness, or watered them by the still waters of some gently flowing stream.

Disaster may have come to health or fortune, and out of his deep sorrow, through tear-dimmed eyes he may have caught the rainbow light of divine promise and hope.

Or, as I myself think, an audible voice from God spoke to him and he was made to know the eternal One, perhaps manifesting himself by anticipation in that form which he later wore as Jesus of Nazareth, walking the hills of Judea and by the shore of Galilee's lake.

Certain it is that there came to him, perhaps I should say to them, a deep conviction of the personality, the presence, and the power of God. Added to this was a new conviction inescapable, imperative, that the will of God must be the law of his life. Doubtless he voiced this conviction to his family. Then followed discussions, sacrifices, prayers, times of waiting, and finally the supreme decision to

go forth under the guiding impulse of the voice which was saying to them: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

THE TRACK OF THE PIONEERS

The whole family left Ur and came to Haran. Families often move together a part of the way in the will of God for them. *Whole families rarely go all the way with God.* God does not often call families. He deals with individuals. He often involves a family in the call of the individual, for it is He who sets the solitary in families. Had it not been for Abraham's family he might never have been known to the world. It was a great experience for Abraham that in coming as far as Haran he had the encouragement of his family's presence. But Abraham had to realize at last that Haran was only halfway to Canaan and that God called him out not to a halfway station, but to a faith which led him on he knew not whither till he should reach a place in which God would settle him with Kingdom promises fulfilled in an inner peace.

Multitudes are divided in their souls because they can never break from the trammels of family counsels, traditions, prejudices, occa-

sions and committals. Perhaps nothing else so far vitiates the will of God in so many lives as the reluctance, or inability, to break over the confines of race, religion or sect on the part of those to whom God speaks. Our Jewish friends not only do not, it seems that they cannot hear the call of Christ because of the centuries of Jewish hostility to Him and His message. Multiplied thousands of Roman Catholics who revolt in their own souls against the bondage of priest and confessional are yet not strong enough to break over to that soul liberty that belongs to the child of God. In many sections of the land denominational prejudices and affiliations within the Protestant sects hold down the truth of God in unrighteousness and hinder the Christ of God in His possession of men to do His will. Jesus once said: "If any man hate not his father and his mother he cannot be my disciple." In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul enumerates what it cost him to come to God, to be a Christian. He was a religionist, he had all the pride of family, all the inheritances of tradition, all the conscious integrity of morality, and the zeal of a bigot. But all these he had to discard and cast upon the refuse heap for the sake of

Christ and the righteousness which is of God through faith. Only God can know how strong the cords of parental, filial, or marital love are. Read again the touching story of Ruth and Orphah to sense something of the travail of soul required in the new birth.

But the family was meant to inspire men to serve God, never to hinder them in His service. All love is the gift of God and all love's expression should be employed to honor God.

There is a touching story of a farmer's home on the walls of which hung the well-known motto: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." That sentence of the motto was supported by the daily life of the family. Daily the father gathered his household about him to pray and daily exalted the Christ of God in his heart and in his life. Every member of the house came to a personal faith in Christ except the oldest son who persistently refused to yield himself to God. One day father and son were alone in the room where the motto hung. The father said: "I cannot and will not longer be a liar. You will not yield yourself to my Christ, therefore I must have this motto amended to read: 'As for me and my house, except Henry, we will serve the Lord.'

It hurts me to do it but I must be true to God." The thought so impressed the stubborn youth that he immediately surrendered himself to Christ.

Unfortunately in too many families the disbelief of the one is permitted to demoralize the faith of the family.

ABRAHAM CAME ALL THE WAY

But at last Abraham came all the way to Canaan. He left his family in obedience to the drastic demands of God recorded in Genesis 12:1: "Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." He must now forsake all to follow God. The rich young ruler who came to the Lord Jesus inquiring the way of eternal life could not even find it in his heart to give up his wealth. Many another has stumbled at the demand of God for the surrender of even slight possessions, highly treasured as an ideal. Yet there is no entrance into God's Kingdom till He is given first place. He cannot, and of course He will not, share His throne room in the heart of man with any other. For every man there is some test as

to whether he has really put God first in his life.

One said to Jesus: "Let me go and bury my dead." But Jesus answered: "Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou Me."

Another also said: "I will follow thee, Lord, but first permit me to bid farewell to them that are in my house." But Jesus said unto him: "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Years ago a very dear friend who came under the influence of my ministry, came after great travail of soul to realize the will of Christ for her as expressed in her baptism. Obedience to His will required that she should leave the church in which she had been reared. She finally came to a conclusion and wrote me that she saw the will of the Lord for her but she could not afford to hurt her mother who still believed with great fervor in her christening. I at once wrote her that there was nothing more for me to say. It was now an issue between the will of her mother and the will of her Lord since she saw what Christ desired and put that over against her mother's wishes. She saw that and without further hesitation

obeyed her Lord greatly to the enrichment of her own spiritual life and that of many others.

Abraham must go out into a land which God would later show him. His must be a walk by faith not by sight. We, with him, must consent to walk in the dark toward the light. He traveled, as we must travel, on a promise. But the promises of God are a very good passport through the difficulties, dangers, and obstacles of the way of the world.

Abraham went out to put the banner of God upon every foot of his life's territory and laid claim to it for the divine possession.

John Robertson, the inimitable Scotch preacher, once said: "When the old Spanish mariners, in their explorations touched any new land the first thing they did was to run up the flag of Ferdinand and Isabella to the masthead on the highest point they could reach on the new land. Every new shore was claimed for Spain. The sovereigns that encouraged the explorations of these Spanish mariners were acknowledged when the first foot touched the new shore. Oh, man! when you get your new situation, when you set up your new home, when new circumstances arrive in your life, it is grand to run up the

flag of God's Son, and say: 'This new situation—this new era in my life—will be the soil of his Son.' "

Where are you going? Under what passport are you traveling? Boy from the farm starting for the city, who is to be your companion? You girl, coming down from the Provinces to the States, what are your ideals? What place have you given the strong Son of God in your life? Are you saying within your souls: "I do not know what place, business, boarding house, I shall occupy. I only know I cannot rest in any place till I find God there." Then you will be safe in this great city. Otherwise the wolves will be upon you, the bears and the lions will rend you. For the city streets are paths in the jungles wherein wild beasts of desire prey upon the innocent and the unwary. Israel must travel in the path of the Pillar of the Cloud by day and of Fire by night. This day I can offer you nothing but God's guarantee of safe conduct.

It was written of Abraham and those who traveled with him: "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." They were never satisfied till they came all the way. That was

Jacob's experience at Jabok too. Not in Laban's country where love and wealth were found. Not in the wild dreams of ambitions accomplished, but in the resulting loneliness of that night wherein he must finally surrender his all to God did Jacob the Supplanter become Israel the Prince. Faith is surrender. To put life with all its interests for time and eternity into the hands of God. That is God's first and final requirement. When Abraham consented God counted it to him for righteousness, for God could give to him His righteousness and forevermore from that hour Abraham was clothed not with a righteousness of his own, but with the righteousness of God according to faith.

Now God just takes a man like that and wears him for a body. It is said that the Holy Spirit put on Gideon for a garment. While Abraham slipped into Egypt once he never was satisfied there. And he came again to build his altar in Canaan. Spurgeon said once in a prayer: "Lord, if thy sheep have been bruised and hurt we must confess it was not in thy pastures, but rather when we had broken over the fence and ranged abroad in the enemy's land."

Friend, if you have never yet come to the place of willing surrender of yourself and your whole heart to the voice of infinite love and compassion, here and now He is asking you for that surrender. If you have known Him and wandered away from Him come to Him again today.

In his volume "As Jesus Passed By" Gypsy Smith, one of a marvelous brood of children, reared by a nomad father often absent from their tent home, tells this moving story which I commend to you today as bearing the very spirit, at least, of what I want to say to you on behalf of our heavenly Father. At one time the father was away for six weeks holding evangelistic meetings. The time to the motherless children seemed long. Hearing that the father was coming home on a certain day, they were up early in the morning to welcome him; but it was night before he arrived. This is what happened: "When father came into the old tent we all made way for the baby girl to go to him first, and he sat down and put his arms around her and kissed her and caressed her. She was his baby, and he had not seen her for six weeks. My father kept her a long time, too long for the rest of us who were waiting.

It was my turn next, and my boyish heart was so impatient for the clasp of my father's arms that I could scarcely endure to be kept out so long. When I could stand it no longer I cried to my little sister: 'Come out, come out, it is my turn.' And she rolled her black, bright eyes at me, and said, 'You get me out of my father's arms if you can.' And I cried out, 'Well, I cannot do that, but there is room for me, too, and I am coming in.' "

God is calling you to come out into a land you do not know, by a way you cannot tell. But, oh, my friend, He has come now to put the everlasting arms around you and to say to you: "I will be with you all the days. I will not leave you comfortless. Walk with me and be thou perfect, for I am the God of all sufficiency."

VI

Joseph—The Man Out of Luck

And the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt: and God was with him.
—*Acts 7:9.*

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT there are certain types and symbols bearing an abiding significance. Egypt is a type of the world. Pharaoh is a type of the god of this world; and Joseph, Jacob and Israel the nation, are types of God's people in bondage and yet to be delivered. There is a symbolism of experience as well as a type of person. Joseph was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ betrayed by his brethren. God overruled his betrayal and suffering to make him their deliverer, and the deliverer of a great company of others. Joseph's experiences were symbolic of ours, furnishing by illustration instruction in righteousness and an inspiration to faith.

Joseph's Temptations

In the language of the street Joseph was out of luck. He was up against it.

Circumstances were against him. They had a way of stacking up against him. He had been betrayed by his friends and sold into slavery. He was in a foreign land with no means of communicating with home. He was like a ball tossed by the hand of fate, a plaything of chance, the victim of jealousy, ambition, and distrust. He had not a chance in a thousand. Shut in, circumscribed, and robbed of any proper expression of his own plans and purposes in life, he was in desperate straits and ready to become the victim of any well-made plan for the betrayal of his integrity and the thwarting of his highest or holiest life purposes.

But Joseph believed that adverse circumstances are never an excuse for sin. That conviction held in his mind even though the sin proposed offered the way out of the strait of circumstances in which he found himself. He knew that prison walls do not make criminals, that the innocent are sometimes convicted, that appearances are often deceitful, that circumstantial evidence is not always prima facie evidence of guilt. He knew that slavery of the body need not make slavery of the soul.

When Kossuth was speaking during his

famous tour of America, the purity of his English diction was a constant source of admiration to the thousands who heard him speak. Toward the end of his tour he was asked by an enterprising newspaper reporter how he acquired his perfect English. He answered that while he was a political prisoner he had much time hanging on his hands. At that time he obtained an English dictionary and a copy of Shakespeare and spent his time in prison studying the English language. He became a world-famed linguist able to communicate his great patriotic thought to the peoples of a different race and tongue. Thus his prison became to him the means of a larger liberty.

Bunyan was in prison for eight years and it was during those eight years that he wrote his immortal classic, *Pilgrim's Progress,* in which he indicates the processes and progress by which the soul is delivered from its slavery of sin and is led to triumph over the temptations and conflicts upon the journey of life.

A man can always think himself out of any environment and be as free, if he will, under adverse as under favorable circumstances.

There is no more beautiful nor remarkable

story of righteousness than the story of Brother Lawrence practicing the presence of God in a monastery. He came to the monastery seeking entrance and was refused. He persisted in his purpose. He was made a menial in the kitchen; required to wash dishes, scrape the pans and pots, carry out the swill, but he did his task in the presence of God and behold in a little while men by thousands turned their feet aside to see the wonder of a man practicing the presence of God. So many came that the monastery walls had to be enlarged and its permanent equipment increased to care for the constituency that grew out of practice of the presence of God by a kitchen menial. It is easy to see that inhibitions of the mind are the only prison walls for the soul. That the man who will, may live the consciousness of his union with God, and that whatever a servant of God resolutely determines to have in this life he may have.

CONDITIONS WERE AGAINST HIM

Not only were circumstances against Joseph but conditions were also against him. He was a stranger in a strange land. Who, therefore, would care whether he sinned or not? He was

a menial, a bondservant in a master's house and service. What would it matter if he fell and failed of his ideals? He was an inexperienced youth and the lure of adventure was upon him. The world was a field of untried experiences. The call of the senses, the appeal of beauty, the delights of indulgence, all spoke of the pleasure and the profit to be obtained in the path of sin. He was also the object of a wicked and wily woman's attention. She was wise in seduction, unbridled in desire, unscrupulous in method. She was in a position to advance him, or to ruin him. Sin has no more seductive argument than this condition.

SATAN AN UNSEEN ENEMY WAS AGAINST HIM

He sought to betray him by the subtlety of his suggestion. So subtle were Satan's suggestions that he made them appear to be thoughts of the young man himself. He is such a past master in that business that he plants his thoughts in the minds of men in such a way as to leave them thinking that they are original in these thoughts, that they are the subjects of autosuggestion. Satan is not only subtle in his suggestion, but plausible in his arguments. He presents sin in Rembrandt

colors, the white light in the foreground and the darker shadows only in the background. He will tell this youth that he has everything to gain, nothing to lose. He has no friends to grieve or to lose. What was suggested was only the natural expression of natural desire. He had no reputation to preserve. Youth must have its fling. Every young man is expected to sow his wild oats. Besides all that he was not responsible for his situation. He was caught in a net of circumstances; and, above all, God seems to have forsaken him. That is what he said to Job through the lips of his wife. But it is to the everlasting credit of Job that he told his wife that she was a fool; that though he could not understand the ways of God he would trust His providence; that even though God should slay him he would not forego his trust in Him. I think that men need to understand that there are times when God thrusts a man in hard circumstances in order to give him a chance to maintain his integrity and to honor Him by his steadfastness and faithfulness. He will let you lose your fortune in order to demonstrate your faith. He may permit you to lose your friends and thereby find your Saviour. You may lose your health

and find your happiness. The loss of all positions may only demonstrate the presence of a divine Providence. God would demonstrate, if you would permit Him, the fact in your life that the Holy Spirit is a mightier power than Satan and that the things of God are more to be desired than the richest treasures of earth.

JOSEPH REFUSED TO SIN AGAINST HIMSELF

He had his character to think about. He knew that he had to live with himself and whether at home or abroad, in a prison or a palace; whether as a menial in Potiphar's house or a minister on Pharaoh's throne, by day or by night, he would never be able to get away from himself. Besides that he had a conscience. In advance it raised its voice in protest against the thing proposed, and warned him of a lifetime in which the memory of evil done would gnaw at the heart and life, as a cancer of evil memory at the vitals of thought. Having these, and nothing else, Joseph was a stronger and better man than if he had had all else without these.

Well did Shakespeare write in Polonius' advice to his son:

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Of course that only if one in being true to himself is conscious of being true to God, of keeping faith and fellowship with Him. The man who lives righteously only because he knows which side his bread is buttered on will betray any trust committed to him when the price of such betrayal is large enough and he seems reasonably certain of being able to cover the tracks of the traitor. Such a man does not deserve the name of righteous.

In the famous trial of Warren Hastings is was recorded that when he was put on his trial in so magnificent a manner in Westminster Hall, after the counsel for the prosecution, Burke, Sheridan, and others, had delivered their eloquent speeches, he began to think he must be the greatest criminal on the face of the earth; but he related that when he turned to his own conscience the effect of all those grand speeches was as nothing. "I felt," said Warren Hastings, "that I had done my duty, and they might say what they pleased."

JOSEPH WAS STRONG IN HIS ABHORRENCE OF SIN

There are men who estimate sin lightly, who make it a butt of ridicule, who flippantly laugh at evil. They regard goodness with contempt. They scoff at virtue and mock at religion. They make themselves companions of fools who make a mock of sin. Their feet are swift to run to mischief and they are swift to shed blood. They quickly find the way in any city to every evil dive, joint, brothel, and gambling hell. They join the crowd that desecrate the Lord's Day. Their lips are full of cursing and obscenity; they are not afraid of filth in their conversational diet. They are stiffnecked against God while pliable to every persuasion of evil. They riot in excess of indulgence. The "bird in the hand" philosophy is their specialty. They eat, drink and are merry in the confidence that they will never die. Even where they themselves do not sin they have pleasure in evil men and women.

But here was a man who abhorred evil and eschewed sin. He had a horror of sin like a loathsome disease. He was familiar with God's thought about it in the awful description found in the first chapter of Isaiah. He thought of sin as of an unclean contagion like

leprosy, tainting the blood, breaking out in horrible though variable expressions. He saw sin through the description of Isaiah fifty-three. The face of the sinner was more marred than the visage of any man. He hid his face from the sight of it. He saw the sinner despised and rejected of men. He understood that he must come to be the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; wounded, bruised, punished, oppressed, afflicted, making his grave with the wicked. He saw that sin soiled the life of the betrayed girl, that sin defiled the boy who was led astray, that by it strong men were broken on the rack, that by it strife, confusion, broken homes, soiled and sordid lives, remorse of mind, and the pangs of hell were begotten. He thought of sin in terms of the stories decent men do not repeat. He realized that out of it grew the demands of blackmail and badger games; that by it honor was sold and integrity lost. He knew that sin overturns the foundations of society and becomes the prolific mother of lawlessness, anarchy, and chaos. Ah, yes, *he knew the true nature of sin and some God-implanted intuition within him cried out against it.* He knew that sin

within himself would be more horrible than anywhere else in the world. Like Daniel he had purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. Something within him made it impossible for him to do this great wickedness and sin against God.

That is the great gain for any man: to determine in advance that some things within him make it impossible for him to do some things presented to him as a possible course of conduct. How many sins, personal and social, would be banished forever, if men so established themselves in righteousness that these things become impossible to them. The divorce mill would cease to grind if newly married couples would put the thought of divorce out of the range of their possibilities. Men who could not think in terms of self-indulgence, of licentiousness, of personal impurity, would not easily surrender themselves to the call of appetite, or the indulgence of lust. Perhaps no wiser nor more searching question could be asked at the judgment bar to those who face the records of self-examination than this: "What is your attitude to sin? What is your purpose in regard to it?"

JOSEPH HAD A WHOLESOME FEAR OF GOD

He could not sin against society. He would not defraud his master by despoiling his home or betraying its virtue. Joseph would not sin against himself. His integrity was dearer to him than life. He was ready to give the lie to that philosophy that says every man has his price. He intended, like Paul, at the end of his life to be able to say: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." But pre-eminently he would not sin against God. Like David he knew that the heinousness of a social sin lies in the fact that it is a sin against God; that the tragedy of a personal surrender to every impulse or passion is the tragedy of a betrayal of God. It is within the sanctuary of one's own life that "Every man shall stand before the judgment seat of God to be judged of the deeds done in the body," and that "every man shall give an account of himself unto God."

The supreme duty, then, the most urgent and imperative duty is voiced by Amos: "Prepare to meet thy God," for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God sees us and there is no escape from his Spirit, in earth, in heaven, or hell.

A little lad was invited to slip under the circus tent with the promise that nobody would know. He said: "My father would not like it." "But," his friend told him, "your father will not know it." To this the little boy replied: "But I would know it and I could not look him in the face when he comes home at night." There is no more powerful constraint to righteousness for any man than the unwillingness so to deport himself as to be unable to look our Father God in the face in the Great Day of His revelation. In that thought of being ready to meet the Lord when He returns lies the supreme inspiration to keep himself unspotted from the world and his garments undefiled by sin.

I would persuade you, therefore, to such a definite relation to God that the thought and realization of His presence would become to you the supreme inspiration to righteousness, holding you steadfast in your faith, pure in your conduct, and holy in all life's relations. That is to me the essence of the appeal of a personal relation of faith in Christ. Herein is a threefold fellowship of light, of life, and of love. These provide an all-constraining control of life's conduct. There is a vital sense

in which to know Christ means to hold life's intercourse with Him—companionship, conversation, fellowship—those things that cannot be maintained apart from the harmonies of the inner life. The constant constraint, therefore, of the conscious presence of Christ with one becomes the supreme imperative: righteousness in conduct as that conduct is the expression of the inner holiness determined by right relation to and in Christ.

The holy man instinctively lives righteously. He will, unlike the horse, need no bit or bridle to hold him in or to bring him into harmony with the Master's will. He will be under no necessity to sign pledges, take oaths, enter into contracts to perform or undertake or accomplish certain duties, obligations, and tasks. For these are his by virtue of his relation to the divine Lord. They will be discharged as a matter of course in the energy supplied by that same eternal Spirit through whom one ever offers himself, presenting his body with its members, as a reasonable and spiritual worship.

So, then, no counsel can be more consonant with heavenly wisdom than that which with loving insistence urges upon you the imme-

diate and complete readjustment of all life's relations by bringing yourself through the choice of your Lord into harmonious relation to God. Put the reins of the government of life into the hands of the Lord Jesus. Leave to Him the readjustment of your relation to God, and then live one day at a time realizing God and yourself in each day. There can be no better hour in which to reach this supreme decision and make the supreme committal of self to God than this hour, for you cannot tell what lies even one step before you in the path you must tread. No man can know around what turn in the highway of life overwhelming temptation waits to fall upon him like some wild beast upon its prey.

In London they give this advice to a stranger: "If the sun is shining take your umbrella; if it is raining do as you please." Here is fine pith and point to the moral counsel that bids you make preparation for the inevitable danger to your soul waiting in the future for you. If the probable temptations never come, the improbable will strike in an hour least expected. If a realized weakness never develops, the undreamed lack will betray you in the unexpected hour. If there

are no visible enemies upon your horizon, beyond the horizon unseen foes lie in ambush. Prepare now, take counsel of prudence and wisdom, and the warnings of life. Reinforce your moral faculties by a divine control, tone up the quality of your moral being by the present infusion of the divine Spirit. Enter now into partnership with the divine Master. Through Him alone you may receive those communications of spiritual life and power that make possible the safe conduct of life here and the successful issue of life hereafter.

VII

Saul—The Man Who Made a Bad Bargain

And the Spirit of Jehovah will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

—*I Samuel 10:6.*

SAUL was a country boy when he first appears upon the pages of history. Unused to the crowds in the carnality of his brute force, unaccustomed to the limelight, he is a fit companion to the lost asses which he vainly sought for his father:

BUT FOR ALL THAT

He stands revealed in the light of history as the most perfect specimen of the natural man whom God presents on the pages of revelation. Reading his history, we are inevitably impressed with the fact that as he develops here is a man's man, a two-fisted man, or, in the latest slang, *a regular he man.*

His story reveals him as one who won and lost a kingdom by the unaided processes of

his own life; as one who played the fool more often and more successfully than any other; as one who risked the greatest prize for the smallest stake of any moral gambler; whose mania of carelessness toward eternal things ever cost him the supreme loss of his spiritual heritages. But his life is full of symbolic instruction to the men of this generation. We would, therefore, do well to pause by this page of inspiration to see what warning, reproof, correction, or instruction it has to offer.

SAUL WAS RICH IN PRIVILEGE AND OPPORTUNITY

His was a tremendous personality. Personality is the richest and the most desirable asset given of God to man. That bottled-up energy; that spiritual dynamo within; that storehouse of character which has enough to live upon and some left over to communicate; that presence that commands attention, is beyond all compare the most desirable of all human traits, characteristics, or possessions. Saul had it in tremendous proportion. Yet he seems to have been utterly unconscious of it. At first appearance he was a timid, shrinking, shy yokel. Yet to the discerning he was conspicuous by reason of his personality. Samuel

discovers it in him as soon as he sees him. The people who dragged him out from the stuff where he hides when called to assume the royal robes of state, recognize and acclaim it in him. He stands towering head and shoulders above all the people. He was a perfect type of the athlete, the boxer, the pugilist, the runner. He might easily become the money magnate of his generation, the successful self-made man dominating his environment. Yet as you look on him when his life is finished and think of him in terms of his own self-making, you are constrained to ask with Moon Mullins in the case of another self-made man: "Who interrupted him?" Somehow the task is not complete. A man may be an Apollo for beauty, a Hercules for strength, a Daniel for daring, a Solomon for wisdom, and yet go down to utter moral failure and suffer the supreme and eternal loss of his soul and of God.

SAUL LIVED IN A LAND WHERE THERE WAS A REVELATION FROM GOD AND A PREACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

He had access to the moral standards. He had before him the highest ethical ideals of the

world in which he lived. He had heard the preacher. He knew the way of God. Providence had made him intimate with a mighty prophet. He had every encouragement to righteousness. He might have been, had he been willing, a chosen vessel of the eternal God. But in his case, as in many others, privilege became the chief ground of condemnation. Capernaum exalted to heaven shall be cast down to hell. Nebuchadnezzar from the throne of a world empire shall be reduced to eating grass like an ox. And the Master tells us in Luke 13:26 of some who in the last day will say to Him through the closed door eternally barring them from the King's presence: "We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

Again let it be said privilege may become the most serious reason for condemnation. Here are some instances illustrative of the fact: ignorance in the presence of schools or in an atmosphere of culture; crime in spite of law and government; unbelief under the shadow of the church and in the sound of the

Gospel; a self-centered life when God offers to take the throne and establish His kingdom within.

Finally Saul was highly privileged in that the call of God came to him. The call was definite and personal. He was given a task and offered a character commensurate with his task. The Holy Spirit was given to him, and a new heart. He was changed by divine contacts into a new man. So that in the final outcome of his life it appears that he sinned not only against knowledge, but against experience as well. One may know what he does not experience. It is deplorable that he should sin against the light of his knowledge; but to deliberately sin against God, throw away the light of God through experience, was indeed the supreme folly.

A distinguished Irish gentleman who had come to this country and made a fortune but had lost his testimony for Christ, said to a friend of mine: "There are days when I walk the streets for hours at a time as hungry in my own soul for God as ever a hobo was hungry in his belly for food. *When you have once known God you never miss the hunger for his presence.*"

SAUL WAS POOR BECAUSE HE ACCEPTED SUBSTITUTES

He accepted sham for reality, pretense for piety. He was glib of tongue, plausible in argument, specious in his appeal. He found easy ways to justify himself and excuse his sins, but he never once gave God first place in his life. He never once had the courage to deal with himself righteously in his own spiritual experience. He, like the Pharisees, lived a whited-sepulcher life, beautiful but unworthy, filled with corruption.

He substituted sacrifice for surrender. He never learned that a man is "his servant to whom he yields himself a servant unto obedience whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." With an easy complacency he substituted penance for penitence, satisfied himself with reforms and missed the essential necessary regeneration out of which permanent reforms grow. The formalities of religion appealed to him as necessary to save his face. He made no pretense of the faith which is necessary to any vitality in religion. He everywhere gave evidence of self-will instead of self-control in his life and actions. God's will meant nothing to him. He must

at any cost have his way. He must indulge his lust for glory. He could never be done with exploiting himself. He cared nothing for the carrying forward of God's plans and the establishment of God's kingdom as long as he could save his face before the people. He judged God and His demands in the light of a worldly, carnal wisdom. He set his thought over against God's thought of him and for him. He leaned upon his own understanding and discarded the heavenly wisdom that might have put a light upon his path and have communicated to him a saving grace.

Many stumbled where Saul stumbled in relation to the destruction of the Amalekites. He doubtless thought he had found a more humane treatment of a conquered nation, and a more reasonable use for conquered treasure than obedience to the will of God would have indicated. It was nothing to him that the Amalekites had defied the presence and power of the Sovereign God, that they were rebels against His government, that their presence was a menace to His kingdom in Israel. It was nothing to Saul that he was but an under-servant of the Lord of glory holding office only upon the divine pleasure. He utterly

failed to understand that Israel's was a theocratic government and that the will of God was the supreme and autocratic law of life for them and for all peoples. He failed, as many others have failed, to discern the holiness of God's nature and the supreme sovereignty of His will. So they set themselves against Him and follow their own ways, whereas they should under all circumstances bring every thought into subjection to Him and yield themselves to His mastery and delight in the doing of His will.

HE LOST THE VERY THING HE SOUGHT TO HOLD

He lost his kingdom. That was inevitable from the moment he began to rule God out of it. Many another kingdom has been lost by the simple process of man's effort to eliminate God. Men lose the kingdom of knowledge, of love, of virtue, of truth, the whole empire and realm of the spirit, by crowding God beneath the threshold of consciousness and of ruling Him out of the throne room of life.

Nebuchadnezzar, while lifting up his heart in pride, found himself pulled down by the hand of God whom he had defied, turned into a brute beast of the field, and forced to live

eating grass, being wet by the dews of heaven and forgotten in the very kingdom over which he had once ruled.

Napoleon shakes a continent with his military power, but unmindful of God is left to die an exile at St. Helena.

Wilhelm with his "Me und Gott" throws a world into confusion of war only to find himself banished from the nation that he sought to make a world empire.

The crumbling empires of history mark their paths with the folly of the men who ruled God out and sought to take the reins of government from His hand. America needs to give heed to this lesson. It is imperative that our statesmen, rulers, law makers, executives, judges, should give heed. No peoples can leave God out of account and live. In vain do they build a city from whose walls the watchmen of God are banished. In vain do they establish governments where the laws of God are not reverenced. In vain do they establish a nation in the midst of which God is not enthroned.

HE LOST HIS LIFE

It is a tragic and pitiful story which relates the death of Saul and his sons on Gilboa. In

a panic of fear he seeks out the Witch of Endor, calls up Samuel and hears the verdict of his condemnation and doom. At the last God rejects him. Smitten in his conscience, he goes into battle foredoomed to death and disaster. How could a man be right when the heart of him has been cut out? How can one carry on under the dreadful burden of conscious disapproval of God? He may marshal millions of men; make perfect strategy; lay well his battle array; calculate accurately his time and method of attack; set his advances; secure his supplies; keep intact all his connections; but one breath of God can make it all as naught.

So on Gilboa this poor fool who would be great without God, and succeed in spite of God, at last pulls down the tottering ruins of his life building upon his own head and dies by his own hand. The Spirit of God departed from him. The favor of God was withdrawn and with a later example of his own moral insanity, he was constrained to cry: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Superstition had displaced faith. Despair had taken the place of hope. The wrath of

God was upon him in place of the favor once offered him.

Finally:

HE LOST HIS SOUL

Self-complacent, self-satisfied, he went his way, unmindful of the warnings of love, the invitations of mercy, the provisions of grace. Like the rich fool he accumulated much and stood ready to build a larger house with which to shelter the riches and glory and earthly possessions accumulated by his hand. But in the dread night of his own and his nation's defeat he heard the voice of the Judge: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Whose hand then will hold the scepter of empire? Whose voice then will direct the fleeing armies to their rallying? Whose ingenuity and skill will save the nation from utter wreck and ruin? A man better than he after God's own heart. To the doom of Saul the Lord Jesus adds this verdict: "So is everyone that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." And that is for eternity!

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman related that when he was preaching in a certain city a University professor stood by him and said: "Let me

give you a definition of eternity." And when Dr. Chapman consented, the professor said: "Eternity begins where computation ends." And he explained that by saying: "If you should take a man possessed with the greatest mind that the world has ever known and let him think his way out into the future until his mind should break down, then put your stake there; you would have the beginning of eternity." Dr. Chapman well said: "God save us from being without God and without hope not only in this world but in the world to come." Think of an eternity with all your sins upon you. Eternity separated from God. Eternity without hope. An endless eternity and only the wailing cry of despair, Lost! *Lost! Lost!*

And yet Saul had his chance. The messenger of the mercy of God was within his reach. He offered him life, but he would not. He had his chance as you are having yours. He lost his chance. He sent his own soul out into eternal perdition as I pray God you may not. Today, if you will, hear His voice. Give God your heart. "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." Now! Now!

VIII

David—Thy Gentleness Hath Made Me Great

And thy gentleness hath made me great.
—Psalm 18:35.

GOD SEEKS more than the salvation of the soul. Perhaps no other Gospel is so little regarded as this. What more could be desired than continuity of life and eternal bliss therein?

God seeks more than immortality for men, though it would seem that when He has brought forth the gifts of life and immortality nothing more of blessedness could be imagined. Many who believe in the salvation of the soul, that is, in the continuity and blessing of life beyond the grave, are utterly unable to take hold of the hope of immortality. They cannot *see* the bodily resurrection either of Christ or of the saints. But to those able to put the two together and believe in both eternal life and immortality it would seem that indeed here was the climax of all possible expectation,

the ultimate of all hope of and in salvation. Reunion in heaven with the fellowship of the saints; the service of God whose servants see His face and serve Him; these are the anticipated joys which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and the heart of man has been unable to imagine.

But more than all this God seeks persistently *the salvation of life here* as well as the salvation of the soul and the immortality of the body hereafter. He designs the recovery, the revitalization and the reconstruction of human life as it is lived here and now. Outstanding illustrations of the power of the Gospel to recover and reconstruct life from the ravages of sin and the dominion of the devil are known. All American Christians know the experiences of Blue Bird of Mulberry Bend and Jerry McAuley of 316 Water Street, New York. Here were two human wrecks, derelicts on the sea of life, seemingly beyond all possibility of recovery, salvaged as wrecks from the deep, recovered to health from mortal sickness, renewed in hope from the suicide of despair, given the liberty of faith from the dungeon of doubt, perfectly cleansed from the foulness and filth of sin, given a testimony of redeeming

grace, and safely anchored in the harbor of divine mercy.

Yes, the grace of God is sufficient to recover life, restore and maintain its integrity, re-energize its powers, and reconstruct its service and its institutions.

But God would save youth from the destruction of sin before reconstruction is needed. He would save them from the utter devastation and ravages of evil. He is ever seeking to take life, to direct, energize, and use it. Salvation as proclaimed by the Gospel of Grace is aseptic as well as antiseptic. That is, it proposes the salvation of life before its experience in sin has spoiled it.

TWO TYPES OF EXPERIENCE

The conspicuous illustrations of divine grace as operative in human life are set forth in the Word of God in two types. There is the type illustrated in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, attended as it was by the blinding light above the brightness of the Syrian noonday sun, the sound of an audible voice, the prostration of a guilty sinner, in the cry: "Who art thou, Lord? What wilt thou have me to do?" followed by the ministry of God's servant, the

falling away of scales from the eyes of the convicted sinner, and his immediate conversion and baptism. But there is also the conversion of Timothy, the faith of whose mother and grandmother led him by easy stages through the gate of childhood's winsome love safe into the fold of the Good Shepherd. And there is the experience of Lydia, whose heart the Lord quickly opened to receive the good news spoken by His ministers as she sat in the place of prayer.

To go back to the Old Testament for illustrations we light upon Isaiah in despair over social conditions and suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that personal experience is involved in social disaster, caught in the grip of a heavenly vision that first humiliated and prostrated him, then cleansed and restored him, and then set him on his feet keen to serve under a divine commission in the face of the most desperate difficulties. There is also the experience of David, whose story reveals no hour in which his youth did not seem to sense the divine Presence, in which he did not live as the man after God's own heart.

Gathering flowers and conversing, two lads walked together beside a tiny stream—only a

span in width. As they walked they found a sign which read: "Cross to the safe side here." They walked on, talking awhile, then one said: "Let us cross now." And as he spoke he stepped over the stream. It was only a step, and he found the Great Companion waiting for him there. But the other said: "No, the flowers are more beautiful here, and the way seems easier on this side." So they walked on, talking across the stream. And as they walked on the stream grew wider and deeper. Occasionally the lad who had crossed called to the other to join him. But he answered that the way was still easy, that the flowers were even more fragrant, that there was only a stream between them, and that he could cross at any time. Also it was not yet midday, and as they were not out of sight of each other there was plenty of time to cross later. Also, he said, that others had joined him on his side, and the company was pleasant.

But now the stream had become a river and the river a torrent. Whirlpools appeared in it and the roar of falls below reached them and filled the air with dreadful din.

Then the friend on the safe side called in urgent anxiety to his friend to cross. And

suddenly the man who had not crossed over was alarmed. He was widely separated from his friend. His way had become hard. There were no flowers. The songs of the birds had ceased. His companions no longer pleased him.

But when he essayed to cross he could not step across as had his old friend. He must swim through a torrent. The current all but overwhelmed him. The stones bruised him. He came only with the loss of all and by a strong hand reached out to help from the other bank.

Then they were together on the same side—the safe side. But the day was nearly gone. And their strength was spent. And only a little of the journey remained. And the opportunities for service and for fellowships were few. And other friends were strange. And with all this the way was new. And he could not understand why the way meant so much more to his friend than to him. Then the darkness and sleep. And all he gave to any was the joy that he had crossed over to the safe side!

Get the children over early! For on the right side of the stream of life the Great

Companion still waits without saying to each new generation and to each new family in the building: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Ah! when will the older ones learn or remember the glories of youth in the divine companionship and bring the little ones to Jesus?

The life story of David impresses one with three vital facts in relation to God. First:

THE SENSITIVENESS OF HIS SOUL TOWARD GOD

One does not know how early in life David began to love God. There is no hint that it was ever otherwise. The instructions of a pious mother, the counsels of a godly father, the atmosphere of a God-fearing home, the moralities and high ideals of his brothers, the meditative communings of the silent hours in the great spaces of God's out of doors where he watched the sheep, all of these had combined to create for him an inner attitude toward God, in which later definiteness of decision confirmed direction as direction determined destiny. He himself hardly knew when he began to love God; when as the hart panteth for the water brooks his heart began

to long for God. Perhaps like the child Samuel in the Temple, over whose experiences he may have meditated much, he may have been aroused at night to hear a Voice and receive a communication that forevermore set him on his feet girded for service in the consciousness of a divine relation.

Maybe he was like Timothy, whose grandmother and mother had led him by the hand of faith to the teaching and benediction of Paul the Apostle. So David's mother may have at some time contrived to bring his heart and life under the benediction of Samuel the aged prophet.

Certain it was that somewhere, sometime, there came to him the moment of conscious choice, or the hour of affirmation of his faith or confirmation of some previous choice in the assumption of righteousness. At least we find him as a youth with inner experiences, settled convictions, established faith and life committals fixed within, that set him above all his brethren and that became the basis of God's choice to make him the shepherd of His people Israel. As in the case of Jacob, it becomes clear that his father's God must be his God. Like sugar in solution crystallizes about

a cord let down into that solution, so in David's case the faith of his family in solution must crystallize about the cord of his own life purpose. He must make definite decision about his life's directions in order to determine the ultimate of his life's destiny.

HE GAVE GOD A LIFE

Youth is the plastic age. Youth is the time of investments, moral and spiritual as well as material. Youth is the time of sensitiveness of God's presence and responsiveness to His Spirit. Christian statisticians tell us that eighty per cent of all who in this day of grace turn to God at all are pledged to their life committals, of life service, between the ages of twelve and twenty. Ninety-six per cent of all present-day Christians made their life decisions before they were twenty-four years of age! It further appears that those who come early into the kingdom are the most steadfast in faith, the most reliable in service, the most satisfactory in testimony. From their ranks God has ever made selection of the leaders of His kingdom, its prophets and preachers, its seers and administrators. Thus the Lord Jesus in one solemn pronouncement

declared: "Except you be converted and become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The Gospel is ever seeking to rewrite on the palimpsests of life the first impressions and messages of God to the soul. It is fitting that American youth should sing:

"The strength of youth we lay
At Jesus' feet today,"

for it is for that which God seeks, and it is that which God always honors by using.

DAVID FOUND GOD ALL-SUFFICIENT

David found in God the completion of his life—a sense of fullness. He found in Him also the satisfaction of life's longings and the reward of life's labors, as well as the inspiration to steadfastness throughout the varying and various experiences of an unusually checkered career. Taken at a tender age from the familiar environment and tasks of his boyhood's home; thrust into an atmosphere of an army camp; suddenly made the favorite of a king whose mad fits of passion frequently left him little less than insane; becoming the object of that king's suspicion, envy, and hate;

married into the royal family; persecuted; "pursued like a flea on the mountain"; an exile from home; the leader of a lawless band of men of bitter spirit; then king over the two tribes, and finally over all of Israel; dominated by the ruthless Joab; betrayed into horrible sin; publicly disciplined by God is King David. He passed through fire and flood; through war and pestilence; through rebellion and conflict. Yet out of all the turmoil of his life he was able to write with a ring of truth: "Thy gentleness hath made me great." That is to say, there was an inner sanctuary of his heart in which God had residence and in which the clamorous voice of the world and the tumults and conflicts of man were never allowed to penetrate. *The throne room was God's.*

DAVID'S SENSITIVENESS TO SIN

God pronounced David a perfect man with one exception. It should be understood that perfection is a matter of relation rather than of conduct. When God looked upon David's brothers, giants of strength, Apollos for beauty, gifted with every personal grace and charm, men of clear eyes and clean hands, He

passed them all by and chose David, the ruddy-faced boy with a shepherd's crook and the boy's sling in his hand. At the same time He pronounced this verdict: "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart." David's heart was set in God's direction. David's choice of God was absolute. The overmastering affection of his soul was given to his God. That constituted a relation of holiness unto the Lord which God pronounced perfection. Now there flows out of such holy relation naturally and inevitably a righteousness of conduct, and David's life was so consistently righteous, so perfectly maintained as a result of his relation to God that God was able to say that he was perfect except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. Thus He challenged Satan about Job: "Hast thou considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and turneth away from evil." Of course, the one exception in the case of David was a fearful thing. Tripped, deceived, in one blighting burst of passion, unmindful of all of life's purpose, he breaks through to wreck a home, to destroy the virtue of a woman, to break the heart and take

the life of a husband, and to leave a bloodstain upon the fair escutcheon of his own life through all succeeding generations. Adultery, and murder to cover the adultery, leaves this prince of God's servants, for a time at least, disgraced and discarded. For a whole year he seems to have been held in bondage by the enemy of his soul, the enemy of all righteousness. But during that year it appears that there was an unconscious, or subconscious consciousness of the fact of sin. David is not like himself. He is violent in his judgment of the sins of others. He is quick to punish error in others. His whole world is out of gear because he is out of touch with God though he has not yet faced out the reason. He could only sing as many another child of God has had to sing:

"How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see!
Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flow'rs,
Have all lost their sweetness to me;
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay;
But when I am happy in Him
December's as pleasant as May."

Life's sweet taste suddenly became brackish. His sky was overcast. The sweet content of his life and heart was gone. His easy comradeship with his people, the kindly grace of his lips, the luminous light of his eyes, the beautiful operations of his spirit were not in evidence. Somewhere in one of his songs he tells that all the daughters of music were silent in his soul.

THEN THE REALIZATION OF SIN

Fortunate indeed was David that God had a prophet in Israel who was faithful to the royal sinner. One day under the compulsion of the divine Spirit, Nathan came to David and related to him a pathetic story of the rich man with flocks of sheep who had taken away the one ewe lamb of his neighbor in order to supply the demands upon his own hospitality. David's sore spirit flashed into immediate anger and he pronounced swift judgment against the oppressor. Then sternly and directly Nathan turned upon him with the verdict of God: "Thou art the man. For all the women of Israel gave ample liberty of choice for you, the king, and yet you took Uriah's wife, despoiled his home, and forfeited

his life to your evil desire." There is no rebellion on David's part. Quick and stern as had been the revealing rebuke of the prophet, so his own self-judgment and humbled vision made him cry with quick sensitiveness: "I have sinned against Jehovah." It was then and thereabout, that he wrote the Fifty-first Psalm, read the world over as the Penitential Psalm. Note the absolute correctness of his spirit's response:

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. . . . And my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight; that thou mayest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

You might imagine yourself in the eighth

chapter of Romans, or the second chapter of Ephesians or the third of Galatians. The heart is moved with the sympathy of experience as he cries in the Thirty-second Psalm:

"When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer."

The hand of God was upon him. Conviction of sin was within him. There was blood upon his hands. His mind was filled with horrible memories. His heart was racked with secret sins. Now he saw how they had stood in the light of God's countenance. He saw sin's progress, the walk in the counsel of the wicked, the standing in the way of sinners and the sitting in the seat of the scornful. He saw sin's utter ruin, at the last. "The way of the wicked shall perish," and finally he saw sin's only remedy as he cried out: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

THE SENSITIVENESS OF HIS SOUL TO SALVATION

Consider the names by which he thinks of God. Hear how reverently and yet how boldly

he calls Him: "My Rock and my Salvation"; "my Strong Tower"; "my Sun and Shield"; "my Strength and my Redeemer"; "my Shepherd." Read over and over the testimony he bore. He never belittled his sin. He never sought to hide from its consequences behind a cloak of respectability. He never refused the social and domestic consequences of his own wrongdoing, but he did constantly magnify the grace of God that had lifted the sentence of death, and the mercy of God that offered pardon and peace to his guilty soul. He found the source of his salvation in the free grace of God, and with prophetic voice sang of One who should cry on Calvary: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He declared of Him: "I may count all my bones. They look and stare upon me; They part my garments among them, And upon my vesture do they cast lots." He gave voice to this confession of salvation: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender

mercies; Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." This, then, was his faith, which when embraced, gave to him that sense of God that can only find adequate expression in the thought of gentleness. It is the word of confidence, communion and comfort. What David found is offered you and upon the same terms.

IX

Solomon—The Royal Failure

And behold, a greater than Solomon is here.
—*Matthew 12:42.*

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.
—*Ecclesiastes 1:2.*

THE RELIGIOUS conflicts of the ages have been between the natural and supernatural. Knowledge has arrayed herself against revelation; science against faith; the natural man against the spiritual man. Out of this conflict, essentially fundamental, has grown that great variety and number of contests between the men of each succeeding generation who hold to the one or the other conception of religion.

THE NATURAL RELIGIONS

These begin with the idea of the immanence of God. Consciously or unconsciously they are all in reality pantheistic, yet their creed is by no means exhausted in the worship of

nature. Indeed, it cannot be said that natural religion promotes directly the worship of nature. Rather it seeks to worship the soul of nature. Relatively few of the earth's denizens now bow down in worship to the sun or the moon. Even in China and Japan the worship of the spirits of trees and stones tends toward discontinuance. If that were the only sort of nature worship the Christian minister might well list it under the general terms of pantheism and idolatry. But natural religion justifies the expression of all natural impulses and appetites. It embodies in its creed the conception that the natural powers of man are sufficient to assure his righteousness; and that if he acts in accordance with his own highest impulses and promptings, and if he obeys his own noblest conceptions, and embodies in his actions his own best thoughts, he is strong and thereby produces a life essentially religious and fulfilling all demands upon him as a religious creature. To this school of thought belongs the oft-repeated saying that "man is incurably religious." Natural religion can conceive of no necessity of mediation between God and man. The competency of the individual in relation to God in its thought excludes any

middle man. By an equal token, if he needs no mediation, no atonement is required to readjust his relation to God and no change of nature is necessary to enable him to do right. He finds the religious motives within himself. And the religious processes proceed from his own moral faculties, which in turn he declares to be a development of experience through successive generations of men ascending in the scale of being. Natural religion concerns itself with this life and this world. Whatever conception of immortality it may have, it only means by immortality a continuity of existence beyond the grave and has no thought of a resurrection, or a glorified body as the eternal sanctuary of the redeemed soul.

Supernatural religion begins with the idea of the transcendence of God. God is. He is not in nature as its spiritual author. He is over nature, its Creator, its Governor, its Judge. The first thought in the creed of the supernaturalist is the personality of God and the origin of the universe as the result of the creative will and power of the divine personality Who is source of all things; in Whom man lives and moves and has his being. From Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all

things. Supernatural religion conceives of God as under moral obligation to communicate by extra-natural means His will to natural man. For man is fallen from the high estate in which God created him in His own image. His moral faculties are perverted, devitalized, poisoned by the presence and power of sin in them. The natural man has assumed and maintains an attitude of hostility toward God. He is incapable of knowing God by his own moral processes. He is by his own powers incapable of doing the will of God, even when he knows it. He is separated from God both by his character and his conduct. If, therefore, he is to know the will of God, he is confronted at once with the necessity for a divine revelation. He confesses that there are two realms of knowledge, one the realm of discoverable knowledge that makes the material universe the ultimate field of his inquiry, investigation, and knowledge. Here he may find limitless opportunities for the outgoing energies and activities of his being. But the confines of this realm are the borderland of a new realm of knowledge—revelation—wherein beyond and above man's powers to discover, God reveals Himself. In that revelation is declared

the necessity for mediation, atonement, and regeneration if man would know God at all. Mediation is necessary for any approach of the fallen man to God. Atonement is essential for the removal and the disposal of the fact of sin. And regeneration is required to give man that new birth in which a new spiritual and holy nature makes possible his renewed fellowship with God, both in time and eternity.

Solomon is a perfect illustration and exponent of natural religion. His writings embody the wisdom of this world. He seems to make no appeal to any powers or mediations outside man himself. His proverbs are the embodiment of worldly wisdom as observed by a discerning man in relation to morals in society, in commerce, in literature, in science. He embodies his philosophy of life in the phrase, *"Under the sun"* oft repeated in Ecclesiastes.

UNDER THE SUN

That phrase occurs so frequently in Ecclesiastes, which is the heart throb of Solomon's faith and experience, as to leave little doubt that it is the expression of his underlying philosophy of life.

His religious and social philosophy was formulated in the expression, "under the sun." He contemplates life from that point of view. His is the worldly wisdom as exemplified in life's labors, enterprises, inventions, estimates, objectives, and activities. Birth and death are to him the confines of existence. Immortality seems to him, if he has any conception of it at all, to be the recurring occurrences of certain cycles of nature as expressed in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: "One generation goeth, another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to its place where it ariseth. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it turneth about continually in its course, and the wind returneth again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again. All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it."

His is a wisdom "under the sun." He recognizes only one realm of knowledge—and that the realm of discoverable knowledge. While writing a proverb against it he seems ever to lean toward his own understanding.

He is possessed indeed of a certain wisdom, but it is the wisdom which is of this world: "That does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." It is the wisdom of the world through which man neither does know, nor can know God. He writes many books; he gives his mind to the solution of many worldly problems; he discovers many ethical principles; he discerns wisdom out of experience and observation; but he is like a blind man in the woods with no hand to guide him by a safe and sure path, or to the security of his desired destination. His wisdom is vanity and vexation of spirit, and to him who increaseth knowledge, knowledge increaseth sorrow, for in much wisdom is much grief.

His work is viewed from "under the sun," and therefore there is a constant wail of weariness and monotony upon his lips. There is never anything new, there is no challenge of discovery or interest. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. There is no profit in his labor to him. "Then I looked on all the works that

my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun." He does not even seem to have prayed that God would establish the work of his hands as his father had prayed in the Ninetieth Psalm. For David had related his life and his labors alike to God, and the prayer of Psalm 90:17 falls naturally from his lips as without doubt they rose instinctively from his heart. "And let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." David's faith had overleaped the barriers of time and space, and was anticipating the exultant cry of the Apostle to the Gentiles when in the contemplation of death he sees the glittering promise of immortality and exultantly exhorts the faithful: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."

Solomon's pleasure was taken "under the sun." For him pleasure was only indulgence, a pandering to appetite, a yielding to desire. He writes gloatingly of wisdom and wine, and

wealth, and works, and women. He surrounds himself with the carnal delights arising from creature comforts, from the vainglory of life. He fills his house with servants and music and laughter. He withholds from his heart no desire, and rather flippantly writes that at the last, for all these things he will be called into judgment. Here is the degeneration of materialism into a rationalistic animalism. He seems to know nothing of restraint; nothing of that fine fruit of Christian faith—self-control. He lives in a mad orgy of lust and license. He glories in being a libertine. His court is hardly less licentious than that of Louis XIVth.

His destiny was "under the sun." So far as Solomon could see, everything ended at the grave, and therefore he consoled himself with a philosophy of indulgence. He said with the rich fool: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die."

That is the ultimate of natural religion. It is the outcome for man if he has nothing from within himself, from above himself, from beyond himself. For him all ends with the grave. His faith has not ventured beyond the three-mile limit of the materialistic conti-

nent of the present. There is no adventuring upon uncharted seas. There is no willingness to venture upon a voyage of discovery for any larger, better world. Whatever rewards of life are to be won must be seized now. His must ever be "a bird in the hand" wisdom. His philosophy of "the present" is to him the law of life. He labors and achieves "under the sun" and can only find his reward of life's labors and achievements within that land whose confines and borders are limited to its light. Here is the fatality of all such visionless conceptions of life—that life's faith determines the end of life's rewards. The Master himself put it in other words: "Verily they have their reward." No man misses what his soul strives to achieve. He has only one life capacity to invest. In whatever direction he invests that capacity, he must look for the reward of his labors, the fruitage of his sowing.

Napoleon with his craze for glory may dream of world empire with the mantle of authority upon his own shoulders, and the only reward of his life will be the glory which he extracts from the greatness of his military deeds and the achievements of his statesmanship.

Wellington can well afford to retire to a quiet retreat and end an eventful career in the consciousness that his adherence to the principle of duty has brought its own just and lasting reward. One must take hold of eternity by faith if he would seize from eternity those rewards which both enlarge the present and enrich the future for immortal beings.

THE ISSUE OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

Now it must be seen clearly that the issue of Solomon's philosophy was the expression and outcome of his nature. His was a fallen nature, a nature still "natural," not regenerated, not born again. Therefore the issue of his philosophy must be essentially as was that philosophy itself, out of harmony with God. That philosophy was nature expressing itself under the control of the god of this world. Its legitimate and inevitable issue is rationalism, materialism, animalism, annihilation. The one cry from the lips of such a fatalist is necessarily: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." A noted psychologist has been quoted as saying that a philosopher is "a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there." In other words, any philosophy

of life not motivated by an essential conviction of the reality of the supernatural in human experience has but one possible goal—disappointment; even as it has but one possible route—travel around an endless circle of speculation and theorizing.

At its best such a philosophy means culture, knowledge, science, commerce, architecture, politics, art, literature, society, and religion *without God.* Such a philosophy leaves life no hope of immortality. There is no door to be opened by the hand palsied with death. There is no recovery of vision for the eyes dimmed by the failing powers of age. In the grave there is none to praise. Surely this is the philosophy of despair and desperation. For man needs individually more than that. There is something inherent within him clamoring for a larger horizon, a loftier vision, a longer experience, a more satisfying realm of life.

"It is not all of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.
I have a never-dying soul to save,
And a God to glorify."

If the philosophy of Solomon was the true philosophy, then Solomon's limitations belong

to us all, and today upon the lips of every mortal man there is only one cry that finds fitting place: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." We must look upon our labor through eyes of disappointment, and upon our love with visions of despair, and upon our hopes with the utter disillusionment of a fatalistic wisdom that knows they are all doomed to failure of realization. That way lies insanity. At the end of that path is the beckoning hand of disaster for every man who staggers under life's burdens, or stumbles in the maze of unsolved or unsolvable problems, or yearns after unattained or unattainable desire, or dreams only to an awakening of phantasm and hallucination.

MORE THAN SOLOMON IS HERE

Neither God nor any other man could consent to leave this as the final philosophy of the race. Wiser than all others in the realm and range of his philosophy, with the added gifts of riches and honor, Solomon shrinks to the dimensions of a pigmy in the presence of that One who "is made unto us from God, wisdom, even righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

The wisdom of Jesus is more than the wisdom of Solomon. When the world through its wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe. We preach Christ crucified. His wisdom is that which comes down from above, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated. No wisdom of the serpent here, no subtlety of philosophy nor plausibility of argument, no abstractions of truth, no syllogisms nor logics to be taken hold of by devious reasonings. Here is One who in His wisdom spake as never man spake. With the clarity of more than noonday light upon the path of humanity He lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is the Light of the world and in His face God has caused light to shine for us. In Him men learn that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and that when one has within himself the witness of the Spirit concerning the inner radiancy of the resident Christ, he has no need that one should teach him. Already he knows all things. That is, he has the key of all truth. He has found the door of all knowledge. For this is life eternal, that is life with the eternal quality to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

JESUS HAS MORE THAN SOLOMAN'S RESOURCES

Solomon had the temple, and the priesthood and the sacrifices. His system was built up with incomparable ceremonial whose regulations are revealed in Leviticus Sixteen. Yet all this splendor of ritual was but a shadow silhouetting the substance contained in the Person and the atonement of Jesus of Nazareth. His was at best only an index upon the highway of hope pointing to future realization. For when every altar had been compassed, when every beast had been slain, when all the blood had been sprinkled and all the ashes of sacrifices scattered, when the last heave offering had been lifted, and the final wave offering waved, when all feast days and fast days had completed their instruction, when the last priest had put off his priestly robes and the work of sacrifice was done, the race in the consciousness of perennial need of repetition must still be singing with a sigh and a sadness as it echoes through the centuries:

"Not all the blood of beasts,
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain."

But those who find in Jesus "the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," who receive from Him that life-giving Spirit flowing from within as streams of living waters, are able to sing with all confidence:

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they."

Solomon had the law. But it was graven on stone. In Christ we have the law written upon our hearts and minds. There can be no doubt about that contrast or the blessedness of it, for the Holy Spirit Himself so reveals it. Hear Him: "the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things:" "the Holy Spirit also beareth witness," "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws on their heart, and upon their mind also will I write them."

While Solomon had the priest whose high priestly functions must be repeated year after year, in Christ we have the rent vail, the complete atonement, the High Priest within the vail once for all and waiting now to return.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. . . . It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." It is not strange that this larger position of faith and its attendant hope should lead us with all confidence to add: "and everyone that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Here is more than Solomon's reward. Solomon ended his career in a grave. One can only imagine the splendor of that tomb and of the royal attendants who composed that cortege. In his life the litter of Solomon had been attended by threescore mighty men, expert in war, every man his sword upon his thigh. . . . King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon. In this car he made the pillars of silver. The bottom thereof was of gold, and the seat of it purple. One can well imagine the royal splendor of his funeral car and the rich military and political trappings with which the sycophants of his court and other kingly courts paid tribute to his greatness in the hour of his death.

But it all ended at the grave. When the last obsequies were ended and the mourners had departed to go about the streets, Solomon's greatness had perished, and that body which had been clothed in purple and satiated with love was but a carcass rotting in a grave. There was an awful fitness in the solemn tones of the priest if he recited there "Earth to earth; dust to dust; ashes to ashes; dust thou art and unto dust thou dost return."

But the grave of Jesus was a vastly different thing. He, too, came within the portals of the silent tomb, but he came attended by no royal retinue. Dragged from a cross by the timid hands of peasant disciples who had to obtain permission to render even this service from the petty representative of a military government; and laid in a borrowed sepulchre and sealed beneath the fatalistic seal of a Sadducee's hopeless religion and insolent arrogance. He consented to sleep there only long enough to let men rest a bit from the turbulent turmoil into which they had been thrust by his untimely death. Then attended by angelic hosts in flaming white, having laid aside His grave clothes, He came forth from the tomb. Thus not only did He leave His own tomb

empty, but made of it a gateway to immortality for all who look upon Him with eyes of faith and lean upon Him in the confidence of assured trust. It is by that open grave that humanity has learned to say: "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

X

Isaiah—The Man Transformed by a Vision

In the year that king Ussiah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

—Isaiah 6:1, 5.

ISAIAH was a young court preacher who was probably born in and was certainly trained in Jerusalem. Jerusalem remains the center of his interest, the object of his devotion, throughout all his long career as a prophet. He prophesied during the reign of four kings of Judah—Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. There is a tradition that he suffered martyrdom under Manasseh. In relation to the Old Testament he is what Paul is in relation to the New. He is eloquent, learned, passionate, devoted, versatile. He lived and wrought in a period of trouble. Political, social, commercial, and religious upheavals fol-

lowed fast one upon the other. He lived amidst threatening national tragedies and international disasters.

Isaiah 6:1 ff. relates a transforming experience that came to him in the year in which Uzziah died. This experience reveals three directions in which Isaiah in common with all men looked for the settlement of life problems and world problems; and for peace in relation to God and their fellowmen.

HE LOOKED WITHOUT

Isaiah followed the perfectly natural impulse and tendency of men in looking around him. Circumstances and conditions in the midst of which we live have an overwhelming way of commanding attention, of eliciting and holding our interest. They press upon us with the urgency of their problems; with the insistence that the mind makes for answers to the age-long riddle of life. These same questions and problems are thrust upon men of every generation. We have them today. Countless thousands of men are never able to divorce their attention from the circumstances, conditions, and people by whom they are surrounded. We are forever asking—why? And

seeking the answer to life's riddle in the complexities of life and its environment as they concern us.

The problem of the elements holds perpetual interest and commands ever-recurring inquiry: the storm; the earthquake; the drought, the attendant suffering of thousands who, for want of shelter or fuel, or power to resist the raging elements or protect themselves from them, feel their helplessness as victims in the hands of cruel and relentless foes and thrust our querulous complaint against those who permit, or order such upheavals in nature; the snows of New England that block traffic and destroy the profits of trade, as well as the tornado that sweeps Florida or the Gulf Coast, leaving destitution and ruin in its wake, leaving men fearing, groveling, but none the less at war with the powers that be about them but beyond their comprehension.

Not less real is the perplexity of the social and political problems; the ever-pressing care of the poor; the incompetent; the delinquent; the crimes of the criminal classes; the immoralities; the moral turpitude of the helpless, milling throngs! These wander like sheep without shepherds! These crowds with their

problems of work and play; the fear that gnaws at their hearts, the passion that burns in their veins, the selfishness that makes natural their cruelties, but share the self-same problems that vexed the soul of Isaiah. The weaknesses that force society to protect itself against itself, but have found no answer to all these and their kindred perplexities, belong alike to his generation and ours.

Then there is the problem of pain and suffering, sickness and accidents, burdens and losses, sorrows of separation and death; misunderstandings and estrangements; the never-ending conflicts of spirit with spirit; man's inhumanity to man, making countless thousands mourn; the struggle for precedence and privilege; the clamor, conflict, and competition of trade; bad government and unequal social conditions between the rich and the poor, the laborer and the employer, only makes confusion worse confounded. The inefficiency, the unworthiness, the incompetence of those who govern, to say nothing of baser qualities. The grinding burden of taxation, legislation which cannot be enforced; laws that are not respected. What a bedlam of voices clamor about it. What a muddle of interests and

problems confuse us. What chaos and seemingly irremediable disaster everywhere! There is no direction in which the eye may turn without its problem. There is no sound to which the ear may listen without its discordant note. No wonder the first chapters of Isaiah's prophecies are filled with an overwhelming sense of confusion. The nation is sick from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet. The whole body is afflicted—wounds, bruises, festering sores, unhealed and unhealable conditions. God's people have less sense than the beast of the field, for even the ass knows his owner, and the ox his master's crib. But a thoughtless nation does not consider God nor realize that its endless confusion grows out of their neglect of Him.

Viewing the world from Isaiah's eyes as he looks about him, we discover four reasons for confusion. They are crowded together in the fifth chapter of his prophecy. The first of these is:

IRRELIGION

The people have a conflict with God. Religion is at a low ebb. The institutions of religion do not bear their legitimate fruitage. The morale of morality is broken down. The

knowledge of God has been crowded below the threshold of consciousness. Sin no longer appears hideous. Religion has lost its vitality. Formalities and ritual take the place of the vitalities of faith. The grapevine bears wild grapes, in spite of the fact that religion is protected, that every inducement to holy living is offered, that there is every reason for a devout and wholesome piety. And he waits for judgment to discard a religion already discredited to leave the church defenseless, to lay waste the borders of the religious community. "I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no more upon it. . . . and he looked for justice, but behold oppression; for righteousness and behold a cry." What a picture! How terribly it parallels across the centuries conditions of our modern present-day America. The church essaying a social Gospel has lost the spiritual dynamic which makes either the individual or social life vitally righteous. Proclaiming an ethical religion it has only invited the death of morality. Spending millions of money on

the machinery and institutions of religion it has so far discredited and discarded the vitalities of a Christian faith as to make sober men seriously question whether such religion is worth such investment and leaves one wondering how long a patient God will endure the follies, foibles, and frivolities of those to whom He has committed the proclamation of His gospel in the earth.

INFLATED WEALTH

Inflated wealth is revealed as the second cause for the bitterness of despair that breaks forth in the cry: "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land! In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts. Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant." There follows a description of the revelings and feastings; of the drinkings and lust attendant upon the godless possession of wealth. Here is a social order from which God is crowded out. Commerce and trade, labor and capital, fortunes and pleasures, that leave God no room, give Him no consideration. Surely these are thrown together in

endless conflict, in ceaseless turmoil. Surely they succeed in grinding men between them as the corn is ground between the upper and nether millstone till the streets of cities in all generations have seemed to be the unsafe paths of jungles in which beasts of prey prowl to feed upon hapless and helpless victims.

STRONG DRINK

The third cause for woe and confusion of the social order is found in the curse of strong drink and its attendant licentiousness. "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as if it were a cart rope. . . . Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness. . . . Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! . . . Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink." Lawlessness and violence, robbery and bloodshed, the betrayal of virtue, the loss of conscience, the damnation of an accursed traffic in youth, and sin and virtue. For strong drink "is a treacherous dealer, a haughty man, that keepeth not at home; who enlargest his desire as Sheol, and he is as death,

and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all peoples." No wonder the prophet of God cries out: "Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his, that ladeth himself with pledges. Woe unto him that has plundered among nations and has done violence to the city and to all that dwelleth therein. Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house. He has devised shame for his house and has sinned against his own soul. Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood and establisheth a city by iniquity. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that addest venom and makes him drunken. Surely such are filled with shame because of men's blood and for that violence done to the land, to the city, and all that dwelleth therein." Surely worldly wisdom that voices prudence in bribe taking and disregards all law, all right, all justice, furnish ample opportunity for a prophet to bewail the wealth in which he lives and question whether there be any safe path in which to direct the feet of those who are about him.

If one centers his thought upon the confusion with which he is thus surrounded, one of three conclusions is inevitable.

First: He must decide that God does not care. He looks upon the suffering, the shame, the sin, the sorrow of a world and is unmoved. He is a God afar off and not a God near at hand. He may interest Himself with men in mass, but He takes no account of the individual. Does not all this turmoil of nature, the conflicts of men and nations, the pruriency and selfishness of humanity in its varied relation, its poverty and want, its suffering and crime, reveal the fact that man has been left to himself in a world with whose destiny God is not concerned? Or

Second: If he persist in regarding his circumstances he will be forced to the conclusion that if God does care He cannot change things. He himself is the victim of an inexorable law, bound by the fearful progress of nature in its evolution wherein the survival of the fittest leaves no room for mercy, no place for love. After all, is not Mr. Wells right in contending that God is only a little wiser and stronger than man and that He cannot get anywhere without the help of man?

If these two fearful assumptions be either rejected or accepted we are left facing a third necessity in the fearful belief that we hasten

to a day of judgment. Such confusion cannot last, such disorder cannot continue. Surely the world is upon the brink of a precipice, and a wail of woe is the only adequate expression of the soul's dismay as it looks upon it—upon confusion which ever grows worse confounded. Therefore, the temptation is to forget and to submit ourselves to a blind fate and an inexorable doom.

THE LOOK WITHIN

The experience of Isaiah reveals an ever-present tendency of man to look within. If the look without finds only confusion, the look within reveals only doubt, for the confusion which he discovers around him he finds also within him. Fightings without and fears within! Here he sees by every introspective glance, turmoil, conflict, moral failure, so that he cries: "Woe is me."

There has been much and just indignation at a recent effort to besmirch the name of George Washington, who, in spite of the obloquy which a man who has lost his own spiritual bearings has sought to fasten upon his good name, remains the Father of his country, "first in war, first in peace, first in

the hearts of his countrymen." I think about that effort in the terms employed by the sons of William E. Gladstone of England. In answer to a traducer of their father's good name, they wired him: "You are a liar, a coward, and a fool. A liar because what you have written is untrue, a coward because you have attacked the dead, a fool because you expect anybody to believe you." Considering the source from which the attack on Mr. Washington came, one is not so surprised as he is at the editorial of a reputable current magazine in which the position is taken that the personal and private life of our national leaders does not matter, that all with which the nation is concerned is the result of statesmanship, the work accomplished in diplomacy and legislation. How horrible a doctrine to be proclaimed by any man trusted with the responsibilities of the editorial chair of a decent magazine. Like leader, like people. There can be no divorce between the private and the public life of the nation's leaders. The forces of our social institutions, built on anything less than the solid foundation of a pure character, must ultimately crumble into dust, and falling, destroy those who have aided in build-

ing. Nothing can be more certain than that the character of society depends upon the character of the individuals who compose society. The character of government depends upon the character of its lawmakers, interpreters, and executives.

So Isaiah suddenly knows that he is a part of the social sin and confusion around him. More than that, he is a responsible part, so he cries with shame and horror: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Uzziah had been his hero. For Uzziah's reign had been a splendid reign beginning in righteousness. But the sun of his day had set in sin and shame. The fair promise of his morning, the glory of his noonday had been hid behind the clouds of his evening, and Uzziah's corruption had led Israel astray. The slack hands of no moral incompetent are strong enough to hold the reins of national government. And Isaiah looking around him, and looking within him, is overwhelmed with a sense of disorder. There must be some other direction in which to find peace, for there is none upon the horizon of circumstances, and there is none within the house of self. So:

HE WISELY LOOKS ABOVE

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord . . . high and lifted up."

The upward look is a spiritual necessity to every man who will keep his feet in the secure path and right ways of righteousness. In the Seventy-third Psalm David complains that his feet had well-nigh slipped while he viewed the prosperity of the wicked and meditated upon the seeming moral contradictions involved in the varying conditions of men. But he went into the sanctuary of God and found there the answer to his perplexity because God was not in all the thought of the wicked. Of necessity the way of the wicked is to perish. The eyes of the wicked man may stand out in fatness. He may seem to be secure in his entrenched prosperity. There may appear no bands in his death and no bonds of affliction in his experience. But he stands in slippery places. His hope shall perish. Life's balances are not unequal when God tips the scales.

So Isaiah, confused with the moral indifference of his age, the social turmoil, the political upheavals, the economic disaster, the religious disintegrations evident on every hand, suddenly finds a marvelous illumination when he

realises himself in the all-illuminating presence of God. Remember that Isaiah comes into that Presence with the world problems crowding on him from without, and with clamoring doubts arising from within. Remember, also, that in the light of God's presence the problems from without, and doubts from within, are greatly accentuated. Sometimes it is easier to walk by faith in the dark than it is by sight in the light.

A man who had crossed the railroad trestle over a turbulent, roaring, torrential stream, picking his way with care upon the one running board laid upon the cross-ties, fainted the next morning when he returned to view the stream and beheld the perilous way by which he had crossed. It was his ignorance of his danger, and his necessity for care, that had been the guardian angels of God's goodness guiding him safely through the unseen dangers. It often happens that one realises his difficulties and dangers in the illumination of God's enlightening truth, far more than in the darkness of a hesitant faith.

A young man recently came to me to complain that he had had no evil thoughts, no untoward imaginations, till he had become a

Christian. He thought his a singular experience. Of course, he could not know how vast a multitude have suffered the same questioning provoked by fightings without and fears within.

Paul had the self-same travail to pass through. He has recorded the story of it in the seventh chapter of Romans. The trouble with my young friend was that he had not had enough of spiritual light to discern his moral lapses.

Another young friend blamed his profanity on others till he came to Christ for a clean heart. As Christ swept the foul brood of carnal things out of his heart he suddenly realized that he had permitted the viper to nest there—evil thoughts, adulteries, unclean desires, lasciviousness, malice, bitterness, strife, all children of carnal desire for which no man can blame another, and can righteously condemn only himself because he has yielded to Satan, the prolific parent of those children of lust in the hearts of men.

A COMPREHENSIVE CONFESSION

Isaiah suddenly makes a comprehensive confession toward God, a confession embrac-

ing himself and his fellows. He reverses his former views. In the fifth chapter of his prophecy he records four or five different reasons for being in despair about the social order in the midst of which he dwelt. But in the sixth chapter it comes to him with startling suddenness and terrific force that he himself is involved in the disorders of society, and that his involvement there spells responsibility, may indeed necessitate a verdict of moral guilt. It is refreshing beyond measure to find him suddenly putting himself first in the moral balance. He is not now the social reformer seeking to correct the evils of society, or fastening the blame upon men or institutions. The cry of the man who has ceased to look around and within him and has begun to look above him is: "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips. The world must remain wrong as long as I am wrong. There can be no social reformation for my society until there is a spiritual regeneration for my life." Regenerated personality is the fountain out of which the stream of social reformation always flows. It has no other source. It can have no other hope of permanency.

Said a famous evangelist: "If you want a

revival to begin in your community, go into your own room, lock the door, get down upon your knees, draw a chalk mark around yourself, and ask God to start the revival inside that chalk mark. When God has answered that prayer the revival will be on for your community."

Those are words of profound wisdom. If the social reformers of this world would begin their reformation by a complete and final readjustment of their own life relations, not to society but to God, and then release their God-filled, God-energized personalities upon society, something in the way of permanent reformation might be accomplished. But one will never be begun till the other is done.

By an equal token, when Isaiah saw that he was himself involved with society he saw that society was involved with him. His cry does not end with: "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips." By necessary sequence of relation he must add: "I dwell among a people of unclean lips." Both are tarred with the same pitch. Sin lies at the root of all social disorder. Every community of society is marred by the ravages of those internal combustions of desire that inflame man's soul

to rebellion against the sovereign lordship of the holy God in human life. All the wrong in society is wrong within man. Then society through the men who compose it becomes wrong in its relation to God. This is fundamental. And the correction of condition is to be obtained only in the correction of relation. The fountain will determine the flow. Make the fountain clean and let its waters flow and the stream will keep itself pure.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RIGHTNESS

By the upward look a new inspiration is formed within this man. "I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, high and lifted up." Here is but another setting for Malachi 3:1: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness."

It was also a transforming experience for Isaiah to realize that the healing relation which provides correction of condition is a matter to be accomplished only by God Himself. The healing is in God. And so it is permitted to this man to see in his vision One taking a coal, a live coal, from off the altar of God, and flying with it between the tongs, laying it, a cleansing flame, upon the unclean lips. He whom God heals is made whole. He whom God recovers has health. Henceforth such a man may of necessity abide in the world. He can never again be of the world. It may become his God-ordained task to work with the world and live in closer contact to the world than ever before, but there will be upon him a certain spiritual immunity delivering him from its contagions, its disintegrating influences. He will henceforth live in the midst of his fellows, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Aspiration to serve men is born of inspiration to see God. The man whose lips were touched with the live coal from the altar of God, who comes to his feet in the grip of a supreme God-consciousness, will suddenly see with eyes from which the scales have forever fallen that the very conditions which

provoked the wrath of God, and perplex the hearts of men, provide the field and reason for serving God. Here is the sickness needing the physician; the blindness needing a guide; the burdens waiting for the strength that lifts loads; the sorrows crying for the comforter; prisoners whose eyes have looked through their prison doors for the sight of the deliverer; souls that sit alone in the darkness listening for the feet of the messengers of peace. A redemptive experience necessitates a redemptive service. There are inevitable sequences of salvation. "Go home to thy friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee and how he hath saved thee." The comfort wherewith we are comforted is ours only that we may comfort others thereby. Having found our own feet upon a rock and come to the consciousness that we are held securely there by the right hand of God's righteousness, we can no more forbear the downward reach to "rescue the perishing, care for the dying, lift up the fallen," than the sun can fail to recall to life the drooping flowers of the field, or trees of the forest after the blight of winter, or the blast of the storm.

So with an exultant cry, Isaiah having seen the Lord in His glory, even as he had seen man in his shame, hearing the challenging query of God: "Who will go for us?" answers: "Here am I, send me." Being saved, he will become a saviour. Being at one with humanity in his sin, and at one with God in his holiness, he becomes united to each in their quest for each other.

A NEW EXPRESSION OF PERSONALITY

Finally, Isaiah finds a new expression of himself in a ministry of reconciliation. Keeping the God-consciousness alive, he goes forth with four great words upon his lips.

First: He must call men to repentance.

Second: He will declare to them the terms and conditions of redemption.

Third: He will then preach to them the ethics of the kingdom, and

Fourth: He will present to them the Christ of the Kingdom.

Take them in order. Put together certain parts of that wondrously comprehensive and compelling message of this Old Testament seer-saint-evangelist:

Isaiah 55:6-7. "Seek ye the Lord while he

may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

That is the call to repentance.

What are the terms of redemption? Here they are. More plainly stated than in perhaps any other comprehensive statement in all the annals of inspired truth.

Isaiah 53:4-6. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

To one who has met the conditions and experiences of redemption, the ethics of Jehovah become the necessary expression of life.

Isaiah 60:1, 4. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen

upon thee. . . . Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: they all gather themselves, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be carried in the arms."

Isaiah 60:20-21. "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light . . . Thy people also shall be righteous."

But the climax of all the revelation for righteousness lies in that supreme utterance of divine inspiration in Isaiah 53:10-12:

"Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

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